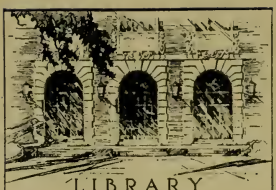

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Mariamne.

VOLUME III.

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Mariamne:

an

Historical Novel

of

Palestine.

" If you will see a pageant truly play'd,
Between the pale complexion of true love
And the red glow of scorn and proud disdain,
Go hence a little, and I shall conduct you,
If you will mark it."—AS YOU LIKE IT.

VOL. III.

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Mariamne.

CHAPTER XVI.

Salome, full of all she had heard and seen, and knowing the value of first impressions, and the effects of suspicion and jealousy on her brother, had rode as far as Eltekon to meet him. She soon separated him from his retinue, and thus began;

"Peace and honour attend the steps of my lord the king. Great is the joy which succeeds to grief when the false reports of the wicked and designing have caused our tears to flow; such has been mine since I heard, that you were safe, and all men satisfied, that you were a spotless king."

The monarch, fearing that she was about to enter on a subject which was the phantom of his soul, interrupted her;

"Thanks Salome; I always knew that your affection was such as a sister's should be, and that you would rejoice at every good which happened to me. How is my beloved Mariamne and my sons? I shall see her on the Palace top chiding my delay, and saying, 'Why does he tarry, why are his steeds so slow.' Let us hasten on, for I would meet my love with the speed of the mountain roe."

He touched his steed with the rowel, and would have bounded onward, if Salome had not arrested his speed, by saying;

"Ah, fleet must be the steed, my brother, that can overtake a treacherous woman."

Herod stopped short, and exclaimed;

"The import of those words is treason to my ears. Did I hear rightly? Say—What would you mean?"

Salome affected grief, and replied;

"Alas, I always told you that the Triumvir loved her."

The king interrupted her by saying with eager voice,

" Well,—What of that? He is with the Parthian, and there may he rot. But why tell me that he loves my Mariamne?"

Salome turned aside, as she replied;

" I cannot be the unwelcome bearer of such intelligence. Go to Jerusalem, and you will soon be told it."

The king was, by this time, worked up to a degree of wrath, that made even Salome afraid; for his colour came and went, and his eyes flashed fire, while his pale lips quivered as he muttered vengeance. Then, in a voice that made his sister start, he demanded;

" By your loyalty I command you to disclose all you know."

At the same time he stopped his steed, and waved his hand for his retinue to retire. Salome had recovered her temporary alarm, and was again the cool determined revengeful spirit. She bowed her head, and replied;

" Since the king commands, I obey.—Mariamne, Alexandra, the faithful Babarrah, and

grateful Dermah, with others, have left Jerusalem, and sought the protection of the Roman Commander Julius, whom I heard had been in constant correspondence with Antony."

At these tidings the blood flushed his cheeks, anger fired his eyes, and he called out, as he dashed the spurs into his courser's sides;

"For Jerusalem."

Salome was left with hardly an attendant, and all were wondering what had happened to thus excite the monarch's wrath. This Erinnys began to repent that she had not told her tale so as to include more of the poison which she wished to instil. She had not long to regret her dulness; for in a few minutes Herod came riding towards her without any follower. His anger no longer seemed to agitate him like a tempest of the soul; his face was of an ashy paleness, his brows were lowering, his mouth drawn close, and determination painted on his countenance. He addressed his sister as he turned his horse to pursue the same route;

"Tell me all you know of these foul proceedings. My anger was justly excited and

nature in me will have her full sway for a time. I have my duties to fulfil, and so must be prepared. When did they leave Jerusalem? Why did they go to Julius, and not to Arabia with that old earless Priest?"

She replied with precision, tinctured with austerity;

"Sire, my affection made me desirous of gently and gradually touching the tenderest bonds of our nature, which, in you, have been so cruelly ungratefully lacerated. Now you forget the close degree of kindred that we stand in, and above all my long-tried unvarying love, and command me to make known all I can tell as a secret of state, I shall obey my lord the king, though reluctantly, because it will fill his heart with grief and indignation. Alas, such cares are our daily lot."

"Sister, forgive my anger;—the facts, not you, excited it. I come to receive information from you, not to demand it. I am assured of your love, so freely tell me all that has happened, that my astonishment may not give my enemies cause to rejoice. My heart stops its beat that I

may listen. Come, Salome, be kind, and tell your wounded brother."

"Ah Herod," replied the artful woman, "you ever held the reins of my heart and tongue, so I will obey you for once, reluctantly.—Your death was reported; consternation and grief filled the city. Attendants hastened to the queen's apartments; she was found attired in her robes of state, sitting with anxious looks fixed upon her children, and so made the weeping women think that she had heard the dire report, and in excess of anguish had forgotten her dress and sleep, and come with instinctive fondness to her children. She started from the ground, and with a loud and wondering voice demanded the cause, when she heard it, she gave one shriek, seized the spear of some fierce Asmonean, and called aloud for Babarrah and for help, and vowed to defend herself and babes against the Egyptian queen and Antony. Babarrah was at hand, as if expecting to be summoned, and, *without ceremony, entered your wife's apartment.* In the same breath your queen ordered your uncle, whom you left procurator with her, to be seized and confined."

At these words the listening monarch started and with a wild and troubled look repeated them;

"Seized and confined—Joseph my procurator and uncle to be seized and imprisoned."

His eyes glanced on Salome's as if he would read her inmost thoughts and he added;

"Why did she order him to be seized?"

Salome cooly continued;

"I know not—neither can I tell why she marshalled with her spear an hundred of her guard and gave her children to their protection."

Herod closed his teeth and groaned with impatient bitterness, then quickly said;

"What then? go on, go on."

She remarked;

"Joseph would have doubtless stopped her from leaving Jerusalem, though the report of your death had been true, for more reasons than it would please you to listen to."

He turned towards her and with tremulous voice said;

"Tell them me—I can bear them."

With an affectation of sacrificing her feelings to her duty she continued;

"Whose protection could Mariamne think of seeking but the Triumvir's when she sought the guardianship of Julius?"

He stopped her and observed;

"That does not tell me why Joseph would have detained her—he, yes, he always admired her."

Salome paused, as she caught his words, with;

"Ah—You have saved me the painful trouble of proceeding in this disclosure, which may at last have only appearances to support it—remember another Joseph left a portion of his garment in a woman's hands."

The king was violently agitated as if some internal tortures were racking his soul, then burst into an agony of wrath and seizing her rein exclaimed with choking voice;

"Tell me all you know, or I—I will—"

His hand grasped with a convulsive motion his dagger. Salome grew pale and said;

"What Herod would you do to poor Salome who is ready to tell you all she *thinks?*"

He resumed his former attitude and in a kinder tone answered ;

" Good Salome my soul is harrowed up—O Mariamne—my loved Mariamne."

He placed his hand upon his brow, and thoughts of his foul murder of her brother flashed across his mind with a withering blast, and he trembled as if he felt that the hour of retribution had arrived. After a time he recovered himself and with intense anxiety required her to continue. She spoke with more caution than before.

" I saw Mariamne hurry through the private passage to her retiring room ; her manner called my attention—She did not perceive me—I went to the private passage, and met Joseph tracing her steps."

Herod shook while choking sobs burst from his bosom and some burning tears forced themselves from his eyes, at length he exclaimed ;

" A foul devil—my uncle too, so smooth tongued and respectful—follow the queen my wife with stealing tread through private passages to her Armon—she agitated—guilt in her very steps."

His feelings were too much affected to permit him to speak for some time when with tenderness and tears he said;

" Poor Mariamne to have fallen so low."

Then he muttered as he laughed hysterically;

" Thou shalt ascend unto thy brother."

Large drops of perspiration fell from his brow and he said as to himself;

" Yes—he must have told her, and so won her—it was not love but vengeance—and to crown her spite she's gone to Antony—Eh, this is more than I can bear, curses on them all, I will have vengeance too."

The latter thoughts were expressed in a tone of wrath, and he spurred his steed and rode away for Jerusalem.

Wishing to enter the city and gain the Palace unperceived, he took a different route, passed his attendants who had waited for him and soon entered by an unfrequented gate and arrived at the Palace. With quick trembling steps and angry look he hastened to the hall where Mariamne dressed and surrounded by her attendants awaited his arrival.

No one observed him soon enough to apprise the queen, and he was in the apartment before she knew he had approached the city. She was sitting near a lattice looking towards the hills which he had descended, and now and then a sigh escaped her.

The wondering monarch gazed for a moment in mute surprize at finding her there, and was on the point of clasping her to his bosom, with the first effusions of love, when the recollection of Joseph having followed her flashed into his memory, and prevented him. She arose and went forward to embrace him—The agitated king withdrew and taking her hand said in a hollow voice;

"Come with me I have sad tidings for you."

Mariamne for a moment felt her indignation rise at his evident rejection of her embrace, but at his look and words her heart sunk within her, then palpitated with unwonted quickness. By the time they reached her apartment, conscious innocence and nobleness of spirit had restored her to a more composed state. Herod closed the door, then turning towards her

fiercely and suspiciously, and with some irony, began;

"Mariamne, I hear that you have sought the protection of those Romans of whom you were wont to speak so kindly."

She looked on him for a moment, when the majesty of her countenance seemed to change the current of his feelings.

"I little thought that my affection would have been treated with scorn, and my feelings outraged by such unbecoming sarcasm. It was reported that you were dead. No contradictory intelligence was received. We dreaded tumult, faction, and civil strife. Our sons are infants; though I hate a Roman and a heathen, for their sakes and your honour, I did intend to seek the protection of Julius army. If I erred, it was for want of judgment. When we received the tidings of your safety and accumulated honours, our grief was turned to joy, and our consternation to the tranquillity of safety. Has my lord the king any other charge to urge against his Asmonean wife?"

Herod had kept his eyes fixed on her while

she spoke; and as her beauty and indignation kindled with her words, his love and admiration returned with tenfold force, but in an instant his face become suffused; and as he groaned, he looked on her, then paced to and fro, and at last, while he stared on her and clenched his hands, said;

"No, no, one so fair, so magnanimous, is not guilty."

Mariamne, in an indignant and commanding voice, exclaimed;

"Guilty—Guilty of what? The wretch that has impeached my loyalty is a false and accursed traitor. Herod, never was an Asmonean Princess before accused of treason. The first wretch who has thus impeached your wife, shall not go unscathed. Who was it? I will know."

He paced and turned and looked on her, and paced again, then, fixing his scrutinizing eyes on her, said;

"Did one Joseph ever follow you to your chamber?"

Indignation flashed from her eyes, she started from him, exclaiming;

" Unhand me. Did Joseph ever follow me to where—my chamber? No; if he had, I would have plunged *your dagger* to his heart."

These words increased his surprise, and called him to a calmer state, and he continued;

" I do not doubt your fidelity, but only ask if Joseph followed you."

" Your asking, and your manner, imply suspicion. I cannot feel any thing but contempt and utter scorn at your imbecile jealousy."

Herod assumed a more composed look, as he remarked;

" My question is not answered."

She smiled with all the keen contempt that virtue can add to indignation, and replied;

" It deserved no answer. But lest your jealousy should construe my silence into guilt, I tell you, that I know not if he followed me. But know, that if either he or any other living soul had dared to look on me with unbridled thoughts, I would have denounced him. To have offered me insult, would have ensured them death. By Jehovah, you have foully

wronged me; and never more will I call you husband until you are satisfied that an Asmonean Princess cannot be unfaithful."

She turned to go, but he detained her, and asked;

"Why did you imprison Joseph?"

She sarcastically replied;

"Dost think that it was because he was my paramour?"

Stung at the remark, he added;

"Perchance you might have looked for a higher suitor."

Her indignation seemed to threaten to overwhelm her with wrath, but she checked the furious tide, and answered;

"Were I Herod, the king of Judæa, I should be ashamed to feel jealous of a foul murderer, a heathen, the paramour of a queen stained with a brother's blood."

Herod was subdued by those awful words; and conscience, with fiery lashes, made his soul quake with fear. He concealed any outward expression of what he felt, and after a short pause, resumed;

" Why did you go to Julius ?"

With firmness, she repeated ;

" I did not go to him. I intended to seek his protection, since the foul spirit, whom you think I sought, might have dispossessed your children of the throne. I loath him ; and soon should you, were you to persist in being jealous of such a thing."

Again he asked ;

" Why did you imprison Joseph ?"

She rejoined, with increasing firmness ;

" I will not tell you. Send for him here, and ask yourself."

Soon after, she added ;

" My lord the king has accused me of a crime worthy of death. I will not be satisfied without complete exculpation before the Sanhedrin, nor without the punishment of my accusers."

Herod came towards her, and, with a more gentle voice, said ;

" Beauteous Mariamne — You have been wronged : come again to my arms."

She retired as she answered with feelings of mingled pity and indignation ;

" Nay, nay; think not, though a crowned king, that an Asmonean will stoop so low as to be satisfied with such denial—I will summon the Sanhedrin, I will drink the water of jealousy and my vow shall be a cherim, and call even on Herod to produce his witnesses, his accusers, and his proofs of having grounds of jealousy against Antony."

She bowed and would have left him, but he stopped her again and with more tender accents added;

" I have wronged you—my burning love for you has made me fearful that you might love one more deserving than Herod."

Mariamne haughtily demanded;

" Was that one the bestial Antony, or the imbecile Joseph?"

He threw his arms round her and exclaimed;

" You shall not leave me until you forgive me, until you tell me that you love me—My soul thirsts for your love as does the famished hart for the brooks of running water."

She weeping answered;

" I do forgive—Ah Herod did you prove your love, by telling Joseph, if you were killed by Antony, *to murder me?*"

He started from her embrace, gazed on her for a moment with a fixed and horrid stare of wonder, and as a convulsive sob burst from him, drew his dagger and raising it, would have plunged it into her bosom, if her calm and lovely brow, on which was no sign of fear, but rather an expression of reckless tenderness, had not subdued for a moment his furious wrath: the dagger fell from his grasp, he looked on her, sobbed aloud, then tore his hair, beat his breast, and uttered imprecations and cries of anguish mingled with declarations, that Joseph would never have told her the dreadful secret but in her chamber."

She knelt and as she extended her hands to heaven and fixed her eyes with reverence on the ground, calmly, but fervently exclaimed;

" By the Unutterable Name you wrong me."

He did not heed her words but muttering vengeance left the Armon.

She remained, overcome with astonishment

and anguish, on her knees for some time, when a sudden tumult recalled her recollection. She stood for a moment, as undefined and horrid thoughts rushed into her mind, then with haste sought for Herod—She fell senseless on the ground as she entered the hall of audience, for she saw a soldier holding up the gory head of the unoffending Joseph, to shew the vengeful monarch, that his orders were obeyed.

CHAPTER XVII.

MARIAMNE when she revived, did not remember what had passed and sat upon her couch looking vacantly around her. Her ideas gradually resumed their wonted channels, and the sad recollections came flowing into her mind, then bursting on her memory, with a torrent's force, overwhelmed her with sorrow, and she shrieked and trembled and with tears called for her children, proposed to go to her mother, and asked repeatedly for Hyrcanus, but did not not mention her husband's name. Dermah tried to soothe her, then dismissing the other attendants addressed her reason, and besought her to prepare against the trials that awaited her.

Mariamne listened, but little heeded the voice of reason, and replied with touching sadness;

" Woe is me now! for the Lord hath added grief to my sorrow; I fainted in my sighing and find no rest."

She stopped and appeared absorbed in thought; then as if impelled by some powerful influence, added;

" Behold that which he hath built he will break down;
That which he hath planted he will pluck up."

The thoughts linked to these last words recalled her to a more composed state, and she spoke some words of affection to Dermah, then dissolving into tears of irrepressible grief sunk down upon her couch. Even the slumbers that stole over her exhausted frame did not soothe the trouble of her soul, for indistinct and mingled incidents of woe harassed her, and she awoke trembling with indefinite sensations of horror. Dermah had sat near her watching the agitation of her countenance, and now overcome with grief could no longer sustain her wonted composure and pressed Mariamne to her beating bosom while gushing tears fell fast from her eyes. Mariamne was touched to the quick with the sym-

pathy of her friend and returned her embrace and would not for a time unfold her arms.

In the evening her children were brought to her, and though the sight of them renewed her tears, it stimulated her to exertion. She sent messages of consolation to her mother; and learning that Herod had left Jerusalem for the army, she resolved on the means of insuring the safety of Hyrcanus.

On the following day she summoned Babarrah and Dermah into her presence, and without giving them the reasons for her conduct besought them to assist her, in urging Hyrcanus either to return to Babylon or throw himself on the protection of Malchus. They saw from the earnestness of her manner, that she was impelled by sufficient reasons, and it being in accordance with their own views, readily promised their utmost assistance. Babarrah at once said, that he would insure him horses and protection if he acquiesced in their proposal before the return of the king. In private, Babarrah warned him of the danger in which they all lived, excepting Mariamne, and even strongly inferred that his

grandson had been murdered by the monarch's instigation, and that their safety depended on their absence: he added, that the queen was safe, unless Salome continued to try and undermine the affection of Herod for her, and poison his confidence.

Mariamne loved Hyrcanus for the qualities of his heart, while she deplored the inferiority of his natural understanding. He had been to her an affectionate and indulgent protector, and in every instance sought her happiness and the aggrandisement of his family. Though he was lodged in the Palace, and was treated with the highest distinction, she did not think him happy, and now doubted if he were safe, and therefore determined to use every effort to place him without the reach of danger. They were alone, and she thus pursued her purpose.

" My beloved father, it long was near my heart to have you here, that your latter days might be passed in peace, dwelling on Sion, and having before your eyes the Mount Moriah, calling to your memory the glorious vision that in the days of our fathers appeared there; and

my mother and myself near to administer to your comforts in gratitude for all your parental kindness. Now I desire your departure, though it will cut me to the soul to separate from the only remnant of our race, and to think that you are in a stranger's land, and dependant on foreign hands for comfort in sickness and affliction. My mother, since Aristobulus death, is miserable here; and being now unjustly confined, is encouraging an increasing hatred of the king that may lead to evil. She wishes to accompany you. Malchus will protect you, and Babarrah convey you to his capital. I will prepare a fit present for the Arabian king; and as he is avaricious, hold out to him a hope of receiving more. When will you leave Jerusalem?"

Hyrcanus looked on Mariamne until the tears trembled in his eyes, then replied;

"From the manner, my much-loved child, in which you have spoken, I perceive that the subject is not new to you; and that the applications of the noble Babarrah and his wife are known to you. How can I leave my only remaining child here; for, my daughter, Alexandra

will, I hope, escape with me, surrounded by dangers and enemies that thirst for blood? I am ready to leave this pilgrimage, and be gathered unto my fathers, and fain would die in Jerusalem. No; I cannot—I will not leave thee."

He bent upon her neck, and wept. Mariamne's resolution for his safety was not to be shaken by his tears; and though affected, she restrained her feelings, and thus continued;

"Hyrcanus, I have known the depth and sincerity of your love. Your presence here is fraught with danger to yourself and to my mother,—perchance to me. Prove that your affection has undergone no diminution by following the advice of those who are your friends, and quitting Jerusalem, until happier times return. The old man shook his silvered hair and beard, and sadly answered;

"Phraates honoured me, my people did all they could to make my exile happy, but I thought of my children; and, 'by the rivers of Babylon, I sat down and wept, when I remembered thee, O Zion.' Like our captive

fathers, I prefer 'Jerusalem above my chief joy.' Who can be my enemy? I only ask to dwell here in peace, and then to sleep with my fathers; and, alas, alas, with my youthful children who have died before me. My only daughters are your mother Alexandra and yourself. I will stay; and if it pleases my Creator to call me away, I shall cheerfully obey him, if I die in the blessed 'inheritance of peace'."

She wept in bitterness of sorrow at his resolution.

CHAPTER XVIII.

MARIAMNE smiled no more; poignant anguish wracked her soul, and hopeless misery spread a chill and dreary waste of woe far and wide before her. Her race was no longer known in Israel; her brother had fallen a victim to an early tomb; Hyrcanus and her mother were prisoners, and in danger; her friends were in jeopardy; she was begirt with fell and remorseless enemies; her husband had suspected her of the worst of crimes, and, in his headlong fury, sacrificed an innocent victim to his jealousy; thus proving, that the fierce and sanguinary dispositions had, like a legion of infernal spirits, obtained the mastery over the few remaining and better feelings, and as he held

uncontrolled dominion, would soon whelm him in an abyss of crime and misery.

She did not see him after the death of Joseph, and in addition to all she suffered, was harassed by the corroding vexation of suspense. Her children no longer yielded her pleasure, while her affection was increased by apprehension, until she longed to 'flee away with them and be at rest.' Even her fervent piety was so overwhelmed by the weight of misery, that, for a time, her mind yielded to the deepest dejection, and was a prey to silent, hopeless despair.

Dermah tried to soothe and rouse her to exertion for the sake of her children, but did not offer her the consolation of hope. She saw that Herod had commenced his dire career, and that death alone would stop him. Her line of conduct had been adopted with the concurrence of Babarrah: it accorded with their characters, and was preliminary to their proposing a plan, by which, at least, the safety of the queen might be secured.

Salome, though aware that half her work of vengeance was completed, felt alarm at the

dreadful effects she had produced, and left Jerusalem; that she might, like the serpent, whose poison-fang was exhausted, renew her venom and her courage, removed from the sight of her victim.

Cypros kept within her Armon brooding with sorrow and fear, and keeping her mind in a state of doubt on the recent events, not without suspicion that Salome had been the accidental instigator of Herod's fatal anger.

As no meeting had taken place between Mariamne and her husband, none of his family enquired for her. She passed her days with Alexandra, Hyrcanus, and Dermah. The former had become more weak and fearful than before, and began to look on her daughter as the cause of all her misery, and sometimes referred to her hasty betrothment; more than once she wrung the afflicted heart of Mariamne with bitterer anguish, by inferring that she had not been sufficiently circumspect, considering the character of her husband; and oftentimes regretted, that her love for her brother had induced her to express her admiration of him in unguarded

terms: thus harrowing up her mind with horrid thoughts of the possibility of her husband's guilt. Hyrcanus in vain attempted to correct her; fear and selfishness had so completely filled her mind, that he had no controul over her. Months passed in this miserable manner, when Mariamne received a kind and repentant letter from Herod, containing protestations of his love, and begging her to prepare for the reception of the queen of Egypt. Mariamne had recovered her vigour of mind, though her heart was broken with sorrow, and determined to exert herself, since it might be a means of obtaining protection for Hyrcanus, and of removing any passing doubt, of her conduct, that might exist among the people.

The wily Egyptian had reached Jericho and remained there some days, arranging with Herod the amount of the tribute to be paid by him, for the balsam gardens and surrounding district, which the Triumvir had given to her.

The delusions of policy, ambition and crime, had indurated the feelings, and lulled the conscience of the king. Although he paced the margin of the pool where he murdered Aristobu-

lus, he felt no remorse, but drove the recollection from his mind with the forced belief, that the safety of himself and kingdom required the sacrifice, which the folly of the youth had entailed on him. It was on the same spot that he doubted, whether he would permit the vicious Cleopatra to be his concubine, or would rid the world of so vile a pest. He was inclined to the latter proceeding, but seeing the danger of the enterprise resolved to consult his friends.

As no women resided in the palace he occupied, he ordered Ananeel, Babarrah, Sohemus, and a Parthian chief, who detested Cleopatra, to meet him at midnight in the most secluded recess of the Armon. The room was large and lofty, the walls were hung with purple velvet, and ample curtains of the same texture trimmed with gold fell in heavy folds, and divided it from the more spacious apartment without—it was a room in the centre of another, the sides of which were composed of the richest hangings; round them were low cushions, the carpet was of silk and worsted, and in the centre was a low table surrounded with couches, on which stood one

small lamp, emitting so feeble a light, that the distant parts of the room were veiled in gloom. At this table, the council, composed of the king and those summoned by him, sat in deep debate.

Herod, leaning forward from his couch, holding the edge of the table with his left hand, was watching the sycophantic Ananeel as he offered his opinion. Babarrah reclined on Herod's right, and was leaning on his left hand somewhat turned away from the king. His close shut mouth and fixed eye indicated the firmness of his nature, a careful observer would have detected a suppressed expression of contempt, as he listened to the words of the now exalted Pharisee. Sohemus head was bent forward, and his brow covered with his hand, while the lower portion of his face was tinged with light, as if he was attentively listening to the speaker. The Parthian was twisting the handle of his dagger and smiling, as if reckless of what might be decided on, as he lounged on the silken couch looking towards Herod.

The substance of their consultation may be thus briefly stated.

Herod informed them, that he had required their attendance to ask their advice, as to the best mode of preserving his own life, and the tranquillity of his kingdom ; adding with affected moderation ;

" That pest of the world is here, not to collect her revenue, but to seek for grounds of complaint to Antony.—She has endeavoured to allure me to her embraces by her wanton conduct, that she might bring down the vengeance of her paramour on my people. We know that she has already induced the Roman to bestow on her some of our rightful territory, that she is now attempting to obtain Arabia, and would, if she could destroy me, seize on Judæa, and convert the holy city into a receptacle for her reptile gods.—Is it not, my well-tried friends, the duty of a ruler to wisely anticipate evil, and check it before it is grown too strong to defy resistance ? Day by day she weaves a closer web about her paramour, and after robbing him of all his power, will suck his blood. While she is thus trammeling the mighty victim, she must feed on those of less power ; her last glut was on Lysa-

nias,—her Syrian realm is still reeking with his blood.—Shall Judæa reek with mine?"

While he spoke Ananeel had groaned, and exhibited signs of great impatience; on the utterance of the last words he rose from his couch, and said, in an under tone, and with affected concern;

"As an angel of God, so is my lord the king to discern good and bad, therefore the Lord thy God will be with thee. Now therefore, let thine enemies and they that seek evil, suffer the just punishment that our father David, a Prophet of Israel, was about to inflict on Nabal. Our 'all weighty traditions,' and the law, tell us that all things come to pass as Providence directeth, and so the free will of man followeth the intentions of Providence. Ahab, the idolater and heathen worshipper, was stirred up by Jezebel.—Since the days of those abominations of Israel, their like hath not been seen until now.—O king, thou art as an angel for knowledge, and so knowest, that the words of the Scribes are lovely even above the law; great is the mystery of their sayings—but sure it is, that the souls of the wicked

inhabit for ever new bodies, and are curses on the earth—it seemeth to me, and others yet more learned in the traditions and the law, that Ahab and Jezebel are again upon the earth—if so, let, as the Lord sayeth, the dogs eat Jezebel by the wall of Jezreel. Blessed is the king for ever for the works of our father Abraham."

Although Herod knew, that the hypocrite had spoken according to the tenets of his sect, and was pleased with the inference to be deduced from his speech, he could scarce restrain a smile: he suppressed it, and turning to Babarrah bade him give his opinion.

The Arab bowed his head, then rose and said; while Herod listened attentively, but his heart misgave him, though his countenance was unmoved.

"May wisdom and virtue be the consequences of our debate. I know nothing of traditions, and am equally unskilful in detecting whose soul, that pre-existed, is again on earth in another body, and with another name.—This I know, the lives of kings are sacred, and must not be sacrificed for the sake of policy—if they

trample on the rights of men, drive them from their thrones.—Murder by the Jewish law must be punished with death—"

Herod appeared tranquil though his heart beat and his eye could not remain opposed to the eagle glance of the proud Babarrah, he continued;

"The Egyptian has imbrued her hands in a brother's and a sister's blood, and slaked her thirst for it by many a known and suspected murder, but she does not live under the Jewish law—and so is not amenable to it. The grounds for suspecting that she aims at our monarch's life are not sufficient to sanction her being slain to save him.—If she attempts to seize his territory, he has valour and captains enough to resist it, without the sinister means that Ananeel, by inference, proposes. As a matter of policy, it seems fraught with danger, rather than safety, for the jealous revengeful Roman would erase Judæa from his roll of kingdoms, and slay her royal race.—My counsel is, to let the Egyptian queen pass with attendance and respect to her country; for on her safety de-

pends the existence of our king and his dominions."

The Parthian and Sohemus warmly seconded the noble Arab, and Herod, chagrined and disappointed, was left to reflect on what had passed, and decide on the course he would pursue.

He sat ruminating and fostering suspicions against Babarrah, whom he now looked on as a spy marked for future scrutiny, as one not zealous in his interest, and too imbecile for a friend in times of such perplexity and danger; he wished him removed from his court, and thought of sending him to Arabia in case of war, and entrusting him with some command if he gained any accession of territory: he determined on never consulting him again in any great emergency.

On the following morning Salome reached the city, for the ostensible purpose of attending on Cleopatra, but with the intention of attempting to undermine her favourable inclinations towards the family of Mariamne. As soon as the king was informed of her arrival he summoned

her, and thus expressed the thoughts which were the uppermost in his mind.

" Salome, though this crocodile and her slimy brood have trailed themselves over my fairest province, to devour and pollute its fruits, and have leagued to destroy me—that ungrateful Arab, Babarrah, has so opposed the just intention I had, of summoning her to trial for the bloody thought, that I must entertain her, and see the mixers of poisoned bowls and the ready assassins beard me in my palace, and that too under the auspices of their queen, seeking my life by luring me to her cursed embrace."

She ironically replied ;

" Babarrah shield you from danger—Babarrah shew zeal in protecting your sacred person from the assassin's hand—he who was in your Armon—he who proposed to your wife to fly from Jerusalem—he who has an evil eye, who comes from a race sworn to avenge an insult, and was once your slave.—Brother think not that such a man will counsel you to aught but death.—I repeat, he went without ceremony into your Armon, a greater king than

Herod would prevent a repetition of such insult."

He appeared thoughtful, then replied;

"That Babarrah is not the firm friend I believed him to be, is now evident—but his entering Mariamne's room, was in a case of apparent emergency—his own wife was there—I have wronged the woman to whom my very soul is bound; and shall deem my honour attacked if she is reflected on."

Salome was a little abashed at this cold reply, but immediately recovering her composure, said;

"I hope you wronged your beauteous wife; I did not reflect on her, but merely pointed out the opinion entertained of your former slave's presumption in unceremoniously entering the Armon of the queen."

He was chagrined at her remark, but made no reply to it.

Salome was desirous that Cleopatra should go to Jerusalem, because she knew it would annoy Mariamne; she also wished to prevent her brother going there before her, since his meeting

the queen for the first time in public, after their quarrel, and the death of Joseph, would distress her victim; she therefore turned the conversation to that subject, and asked;

"Have you invited Cleopatra to visit you at Jerusalem?"

He hastily replied;

"She might remain here until the waters of the Nile reached her, before I would invite her to my capital; but she journied hither for that purpose among others, and unless I invite her, she will come unasked.—I wrote to Mariamne bidding her to order preparations for her reception."

"You of course will precede her, and be ready to receive her in your palace."

He smiled somewhat contemptuously as he said;

"She has stolen the fairest garden in my kingdom, and lest she should steal my crown, I will watch her by day and night, and never quit her until she is on the confines of Judæa. —How could *you* ask so wise a question?"

"To know what duties I should prepare

to execute, that no service on my part might be wanting, though Babarrah should fail in his."

"Thanks Salome; I must now ascertain when she will pollute my capital—in the mean time messengers must be sent to inform Mariamne that she is to be received in state."

Salome went on her way rejoicing, devising how she should see Cleopatra alone, and undermine her friendly intentions towards Hyrcanus. She also anticipated the horrid pleasure of seeing the first meeting between Mariamne and her husband.

On the following evening a messenger reached the Palace with the information that Cleopatra intended to arrive on the ensuing day. Herod, in his letter to the queen, had urged the propriety of her being received with all possible splendour and urbanity. Mariamne issued orders to the chief officers of state excepting the priests, whom she conceived the law would not permit to receive, in their sacred habits, an idolatrous ruler. Dermah was in attendance and after her orders had been issued she turned

to her and said with a look of sorrow mingled with indignation;

"Alas my friend, I never thought that an Asmonean Princess would be required to receive an Idolater, a vicious degraded woman, and a murderess, with urbanity—I am fallen, fallen indeed."

She did not weep; at first a look of anguish darted from her eyes, and her features were contracted while her bosom heaved with confined respiration; suddenly the blood rushed into her pallid cheek, and an irrepressible sob burst from her and she exclaimed, as she covered her brow and turned away her face;

"Oh—this is degradation, to which the bitter draught of death were sweet."

She seemed struggling to subdue the violence of her feelings, but was unable, and added in a louder tone;

"I cannot, I will not receive her as he directs."

At that instant Salome entered through the opening of the curtains and appeared to look with surprise on the angry queen, who seeing

her turned quickly towards her and in a commanding voice exclaimed;

" What, am I to be exposed to the intrusions and insults of every follower of our court? Though the sister of the king I will not suffer it—I command you to quit our presence nor appear in it before I give you permission."

She would have replied, but Mariamne continued, as her anger rose;

" Do you hesitate to obey me?"

Salome remained looking on her with eyes flashing fire and her pale lips quivering with rage.

The queen seized an ebony staff and struck a gong with all her force, and in an instant the rushing tread of an hundred men in armour sounded through the avenues and spacious halls of the royal Palace. Salome saw her danger, was terrified at the anger of the offended queen and at the clang and approach of the royal guard, and stood trembling unable to retire. Dermah availed herself of the few moments between the act and arrival of the guard to hasten without the Armon and bid them retire, telling them, that the alarm arose from

accident. Mariamne waved her hand for Salome to depart and went herself to a more retired apartment followed by Dermah.

Salome when alone, was some time before she recovered from her astonishment, or was aware of the agitation of the inhabitants in the Palace. When she did, it was to endure all the pangs of rage with a desire of immediate revenge, and a feeling of her impotency. Numberless schemes, each more frantic and horrible than the last, quickly succeeded each other, at length when her force was somewhat spent and her blood more tranquil, she calmly brooded over her means of vengeance. She thought of Herod's jealousy, his love of power, his increasing suspicion of all his officers, and conceived she might include among them even Mariamne, and use the words she had heard when entering the room, and her violent conduct, as means to fulfil her wishes.

Mariamne's spirit was roused and she felt no regret at what had transpired, and did not even direct any one to intimate to Salome her desire that she would be ready to receive Cleopatra.

Towards the evening of the ensuing day a quick succession of messengers brought intelligence of the approach of Herod and the Egyptian queen. A numerous body of Idumean cavalry variously caparisoned, preceded and cleared the road; some were dressed in polished mail, adorned with curious work, others in the skins of wild animals ornamented with silver or shining metals, and some in the lighter garb and flowing dresses of the east. After these came the royal guard on foot, composed of hastati and velites, then the officers of state on Arabian horses, after them, mounted on Macrobian steeds of jetty black with flowing manes and tails, rode the Ethiopian attendants of the queen, dressed in white, carrying wands of ebony, and each wearing a hieroglyphic on his head dress, to which a mystic meaning was attached. At some distance followed the Egyptian queen borne by fifty athletic men in a car of sculptured ivory, surrounded by curtains of Tyrian silk. At regular intervals attendant slaves waved fans saturated with cool refreshing odours, and distant soft recorders regulated the march. Herod rode near her: he

wore a breastplate of gold and a helmet of the same metal studded with jewels and surmounted by a crest of exquisite device and workmanship; his purple robe waved on the breeze over the back of his impatient milk-white steed. Behind them came a numerous retinue of Egyptian and Syrian horse; the former dressed in white linen, silver breastplates, caps, low behind, interwoven with silver bars, and each carrying a long white spear; the latter were more meanly dressed, and wore quivers on their shoulders, and scymitars by their sides; they looked a swarthy sullen race, and deemed themselves but little more than captives of the Egyptian who had usurped their kingdom. The procession was closed by a mixed multitude on various animals.

They entered the city through the golden gate, and wound their way to the left towards the Palace. The houses were covered with people gazing on the procession, but to Herod's great chagrin no acclamations welcomed his return, and the clarions of his guard were re-echoed as from a deserted region.

Cleopatra was observed to breathe quicker, and cast suspicious glances on the king.

On arriving at the Palace, she alighted, and conducted by Herod, passed through spacious halls lined with soldiers, attendants, and officers of state. Herod expected that Mariamne would have met them beneath the Eastern portico, but was not, until they reached the hall of state, warned of the king's arrival. The hall was vast, built of Parian marble; the lofty roof was fretted with gold, and supported by pillars of porphyry; the pavement was of tesselated marble, mingled with onyx; the doors were of sculptured ivory. At the end of this spacious hall was suspended from the roof a curtain of purple velvet, bordered with gold; before it, raised above the pavement, were three ivory thrones on a carpet of silk and gold.

As Herod was leading Cleopatra through the throng of prostrate nobles, captains, and attendants, the curtains were opened, and Mariamne, followed by her train, advanced towards them.

She was arrayed in a vest and robe of the

purest white, with sandals of silk, bound with silver thongs; on her brow shone a frontlet jewel, surmounted by a diadem glittering with diamonds. As she advanced, the graceful dignity of her mien evidently attracted the notice of her royal guest. Her face was deadly pale, her eyes too truly told the calm and settled sorrow of her soul; while the composed majesty of her look commanded even the respect of the shameless Egyptian queen. Herod was surprised, and felt overawed, though love was thrilling through his veins, as he gazed on his queen advancing in all the might of loveliness and injured virtue.

Cleopatra was attired in a robe of white byssus interwoven with silver; on her bosom was embroidered in precious stones the hawk, a sacred emblem of her god Osiris; a locust of emerald and diamond adorned the front of each sandal; the edges of her robe and tunic were inwrought with hieroglyphic figures; on her head she wore a lunette, indicative of her rank among the initiated, bordered by the Isiac aspic wreath, surmounted by a light Egyptian crown. Her

gait, though commanding, did not possess that grace for which the beautiful Asmonean's form was so conspicuous; her features were expressive, for her eyes evinced quickness of apprehension, and were evidently tutored to adapt their expression to any intended purpose; her nose was short and indicated shrewdness and passion; her mouth was small, and, like her eyes, could vary its expression from the most playful smiles to an unfeeling, implacable, imperious fierceness; her complexion was a contrast to the pure marble fairness of Mariamne, being dark, and not as clear as when she was in the spring tide of youth.

Mariamne received her husband's hand, who kissed her's, and as shebent, placed it on his forehead as a token of respect, while his eyes seemed to plead to her for forgiveness; her brow underwent no change, and turning to Cleopatra she inclined her head, and said, as she placed her right hand on her bosom;

"Queen of Egypt, I salute you; may virtue and honour lead you to the paths of peace."

The gentle and impressive manner in which

she uttered these words, and their pointed import, rendered the Egyptian less at her ease than she desired; she replied, observing the same token of respect;

"Queen of Judæa, may peace await thee and love and friendship be thy handmaids."

At those words, a look almost of anguish crossed Mariamne's brow, and a sigh was hardly suppressed.

Herod placed her on the centre ivory throne, and seated himself on her right hand, while Mariamne occupied the other. The guards and attendants of each monarch were marshalled behind their respective sovereigns. Mariamne did not address her sister queen, but at her command water in a crystal vase was brought to her, and odours sprinkled over her head and around her seat. Herod, in vain, attempted to dispel the chagrin she evidently endured at her cold reception, and of which he partook. The princes and rabbis did obeisance, and many who placed gifts of price at the feet of the Egyptian monarch, were honoured by her notice, and passed on. After a time, clarion, harp, and psaltery sounded,

and a train of richly dressed slaves came in, bearing various costly presents from the king to Cleopatra. Mariamne had provided one of the most homely nature, merely to fulfil the usual custom, and still looked sorrowful and silent. Mingled feelings of anger, love, and mortification, harassed the king so deeply, that his powers of dissimulation could not prevent his shewing what he felt. When the banquet was announced, Mariamne was compelled to conduct her guest to her retiring room. She did it with grace, and even filled the golden basin with scented waters for her use; but her calm and majestic manner overawed even the bold paramour of Antony, and checked her wonted volubility. They returned together to the banquet.

In the centre of the room, raised above the surrounding pavement, was the royal table, it was made of citron wood, supported by stands of ivory; around it were silken couches, inwrought with gold, on which the guests reclined; on the middle step were slaves, exciting odours from vases and censers containing various herbs, and others holding golden basins of cold

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water. Around the hall were many tables for the honoured guests, who reclined on couches so placed that their faces were never turned away from the royal party. The monarchs, with Cypros, Hyrcanus, and some more of the regal race, had scarcely taken their couches, when Herod asked for Salome; Mariamne, without a change of countenance, looked on him, and immediately rejoined;

"Where is my mother Alexandra?"

The blood mantled Herod's face, but dissembling, he regretted their absence, and immediately did the honours of hospitality to his illustrious guest, who was occupied in observing all that transpired, that she might, if possible, avail herself of the evident disunion among them to obtain the kingdom for herself.

Herod tried in vain to keep up the spirit of conversation. Mariamne was inflexible. Hyrcanus evidently oppressed with care, and Cypros nervous and perplexed. The observations were few and unconnected; even the varied distant instrumental and vocal music, hardly served to dispel, from time to time, the increasing gloom.

Though Herod was deeply annoyed, he could not help expecting that such unaccustomed heaviness would curtail the visit of his unwelcome guest; and if his vanity had not been piqued, he would have rejoiced. The festivities of the evening, in spite of every attempt, wore heavily away. After they had separated for the night, Herod repaired to Mariamne's room. She looked on him, but did not speak: at length he asked;

"What can all this import? Why, my beloved Mariamne, do you look so pale?"

She calmly and sorrowfully answered;

"Remembering mine affliction and my misery, the wormwood and the gall, my soul hath them still in remembrance, and is humbled in me."

He loved her too well not to be affected at her sorrow, yet he harshly replied;

"I only proved my respect and love, by punishing as he deserved, the prying insulting Joseph, who was tracking you where he knew he could not tread without forfeiting his life."

She raised her eyes, and looking at him, said;

"That man, whose innocent blood you shed in a paroxysm of jealousy and anger, was your

devoted advocate and friend, and told me your horrid order as a proof of your love for me! I left him to conceal my grief and wonder. *If* he followed me, it was to urge his suit for you."

He paced the room somewhat agitated; then turning abruptly, said;

"My spotless much-loved wife—Forget the deed: be certain he deserved his fate."

She replied, with more animation and firmness;

"Sooner could I forget Jerusalem than that deed, your false accusation, and the treachery towards me. I am certain that he was innocent, and that your uncle's blood will be required at your hands."

He curbed his rising wrath, and turned the subject of his discourse;

"Why have you treated the illustrious Queen of Egypt so inhospitably and contrary to my orders?"

A blush suffused her cheek, and her eyes assumed a look of surprise, not unmixed with anger, as she replied;

"Illustrious queen! the glory of her country, as

her name imports, but in reality its shame, the vile perdition of every realm and every prince she has yet been known to."

With indignation lightning up her countenance, she continued;

"Not Herod, my king and husband, shall be obeyed, when ordering an Asmonean Princess to receive urbanely a monster stained with a brother's blood—whose sister's spirit calls for the punishment of her murderer, and who is an accursed idolater and hundredfold adultress—know that such monsters are not society for me; and if I had not thought your safety somewhat dependent on her, I would have spurned her from my Palace, instead of tolerating her presence."

Herod was more than surprised at her manner, for some of the words cut him to the soul, and for a moment inflamed the scorpion stings of conscience. They soon subsided, and his anger rose, and he asked;

"Have you spurned my sister too?"

With equal firmness, she rejoined;

"If I had, it would have been only a portion of her deserts. She intruded into my private

apartment, insolently disobeyed me, and I have forbidden her my presence. Have you confined, spurned, insulted your former benefactress and patroness Alexandra?"

Herod's anger had been with difficulty subdued; this speech roused it, and he vehemently replied;

"By heaven, I will not thus be questioned—thus insulted; trust not too much either to my love or your beauty. Doris was at least obedient, and affectionate."

Mariamne solemnly, and with great composure, answered him;

"I rely not on your love, and disregard my faded beauty. So little do I feel for my accuser, the insulter of my mother, and the submissive attendant of that Egyptian serpent, that I would fain exchange dwellings with poor Doris, and now ask your permission so to do."

Herod was astonished, pique half subdued his anger, and he would have become reconciled to her, and advanced to take her hand, but she withdrew, saying, as she left him;

"When you know how to value Mariamne,

and pursue the dictates of justice and reason, she will again receive you as her husband."

Before he could collect himself, she had departed, and called her women. He sent for her, but she peremptorily refused to attend him; and he was compelled to go away mortified and overcome. While chafing with anger, he summoned Salome, who had taken care to make herself acquainted with all that had publicly transpired, and to be in the Palace. He hastily asked;

"Why were you not here to receive my guest? The laws of hospitality have been broken through. If you were not able to be present at our arrival, why were you absent from the banquet?"

Salome, with a serious and concerned look, rejoined;

"Sire, I deeply regret the dishonour that has happened to our house: never were the laws of hospitality broken through before by us."

Then, with a look inferring a deep sense of injury, she added;

"I should have been obedient to your instructions, if your queen had not banished me the court."

" Banished you my court," repeated the monarch, with an emphasis and manner that clearly told the angry feeling with which he heard the words.

Salome caught the tone and added;

" That was not all the insult heaped on the sister of my lord the king—The mighty Asmonean acted the part of some rebel chieftain of her race, and roused the Palace, the alarm gong was sounded and the guards came rushing in to seize their monarch's sister."

She stopped and looked with an inquiring glance on Herod, who was evidently much surprised, but only said;

" What more occurred?"

Salome answered with feigned apprehension;

" I do not know—for I was too terrified to observe; but I think that Dermah sent them back."

Herod with a voice of authority demanded;

" What was the cause of this unbecoming broil within my Palace?"

She replied;

" Do not be angry with me—nay, I pray you, let the matter pass without farther notice—I was

hastening to the Armon to deliver your orders to the queen, and reached her second room too suddenly."

Herod looked at her with an expression of mistrust and asked;

"How too suddenly? What do you mean? Tell me I command you."

These last words were pronounced in a loud imperious voice. She assumed a look of alarm and said;

"Oh! be not so violent—my brother—I would not give you uneasiness—you know that I would rather suffer."

With evident agitation and a still louder voice he exclaimed;

"Curse your mysteries, is not a man to know what transpires in his Armon—answer me I insist."

Her alarm apparently increased, and sinking on her knee, she said, as if it was drawn from her by terror;

"I only heard the too proud Mariamne vow to her attendant, that she would not obey my lord the king her husband."

He closed his lips, though they trembled, paced the room, then said;

"Salome keep your own counsel; be splendidly arrayed to-morrow, and be the assistant with me in doing the honours of hospitality to that intruding avaricious queen—Now leave me."

He saluted her and she went smiling to her room.

He, being left, ruminated angrily on the event. It appeared to him, that Mariamne had assumed more authority than was consistent with his views; he was chagrined at her displaying what he deemed haughtiness towards his family, and determined to shew his disapprobation of her conduct by neglect, and at the same time pay every honour to his guest, taking care that his attention to Cleopatra and his sister should be made known to her.

Herod was unwilling to gratify the curiosity of Cleopatra by permitting her to visit the Temple, because he knew that her desire to see it arose from an intention to take cognizance of the riches it contained. She over-ruled every objec-

tion that was urged on account of the difference of their religion, and the laws relating to aliens from the worship of Israel, and quoted the names of the various rulers who had seen the interior, and inferred an intention she had formed of visiting it with Antony. Herod was obliged to yield, and soon after the morning sacrifice they went with a great retinue to Mount Moriah.

Flowers and carpets were spread along the private way that led from the Palace to the western entrance of the Temple. On entering this gate they turned to the right, then traversed the southern side beneath the portico, then the eastern beneath the piazza of Solomon. As soon as they reached the beautiful gate wrought of Corinthian brass, Ananeel intimated to his sovereign the necessity of separating.

Salome and numerous attendants accompanied Cleopatra to the court of the women, leaving all the Gentiles without, they passed beneath the gate-way ascending the fifteen steps, crossed the court crowded with worshippers. In front of them arose the magnificent portico at the entrance. Within was displayed to Cleopatra's

longing eyes some portion of its treasures; consisting of votive offerings. The sun gleamed on vines of gold, wrought with exquisite skill, embracing the lofty pillars and hanging in the luxuriant profusion of the natural tree, the grapes were formed of various stones in imitation of the fruit in its several stages to maturity, and the golden stem sprung from beneath the pavement as if from its native mine. On the golden table, given by Pompey, were vases, models of the holy Temple, and other gifts of the same metal and of equal beauty. On the sides, were suspended helmets, bucklers, breastplates, arms and trophies, all the spoil of victory, and a vast profusion of other precious things: the back-ground was formed of the great Babylonian veil or curtain, radiant with the morning beams. She stood for some time wondering, then felt an intense wish to possess them, and resolved to try and win them from her powerful paramour. She advanced and joined the king on the twelve steps of the portico. Before entering the holy house they turned and saw beneath them, the altar still filling the calm atmosphere immediately above

it with a spiring column of smoke ; near it numerous priests, dressed in the close linen tunic adorned with the typical fringe, a girdle, and a tiara of twisted linen folds, were performing their allotted duties : many others of different ranks were assembled to attend and reverence the king. Beyond this space was assembled a great multitude of men of various ranks in their national costume, and bending in obeisance to the monarchs, as they looked towards them. Without this vast concourse and separated by a low wall and a flight of steps, reaching the whole breadth of the court, with a lofty and highly ornamented portal in the centre, were thousands of women closely veiled ; from among whom rose a murmur, as if inquiring for their queen, and seeking information from each other respecting Cleopatra. Still farther removed and down another series of steps, was a mixed assemblage in the court of the Gentiles doing obeisance to their rulers. The Egyptian retinue filled the way terminating in the beautiful gate. Beyond them the magnificent piazza of Solomon, supported by ranges of lofty pillars, extended the whole eastern side;

from the great elevation on which they stood, the summits of the walls crowned with massive towers were seen, covered with marshalled warriors, glittering in polished armour. Half of the vale with its silver stream could be discerned beyond, leaving a gulph between; then rose the Mount of Olives, covered with gardens, vineyards, and the rich productions of the genial clime. To the right were lofty hills with varying outline, concealing Bethlehem from the view: still farther to the south, the summits of the mountains beyond the Dead Sea faded in the distance.

Towards the north, were seen, over the courts of the Temple, the lofty and spacious tower of Antonia, then the flat roofs of the houses covered with people, and, without the city, the tombs of the judges, and a dark wood of olives. The triple wall on the northern extremity, was studded with armed men; far beyond them were hills and valleys teeming with flocks, corn, fruits, and the peaceful dwellings of the shepherds and tillers of the soil.

Herod observed his guest while examining more closely the treasures in the portico, and was so alarmed at her admiration, that he regretted she ever came.

The Babylonian silken veil, inwrought with various blended hues, and edged with glittering gold and chrystal, was drawn aside, and they would have passed into the Sanctuary, if the effulgent light that burst upon them had not compelled them to incline their heads and shield their sight; at the same moment, a shout of acclamation from the assembled people made even the distant hills re-echo. Cleopatra expressed her wonder, and still shielding her eyes, entered with quicker step. The sides and pillars were sheathed with gold, the cornices and entablatures were of embossed silver, and the pavement of the whitest marble. The golden vessels and precious implements, used on the great feasts, were ranged in order; near the Holy of Holies stood the golden altar of incense, and the golden table containing the shew bread; and coffers of gold and ivory were placed in niches for the reception of treasure. — Before them were the

veils that divided the Sanctuary from the Holy of Holies. Cleopatra was advancing towards them when Ananeel arrested her steps: she became deadly pale when he and other priests exclaimed, "to touch the veil is death."—She returned with Herod, amazed and even awe struck, at the dread solemnity, yet simplicity, when compared with the rites and labyrinths of Egypt, of the Jewish Temple.

The scene of the preceding night had given a violent shock to Mariamne, and she had been unable to leave her couch; Cleopatra availed herself of her absence to try and wind Herod to her purposes. She allured him to the summit of the Palace, and beneath the silken canopy put forth all her arts of captivating to win the suspicious king. He dissembled, receiving her advances as the familiarities of friendship, and the common freedoms of her manner. It was contrary to his wish to be alone with her; but she had induced him to retire with her on the excuse of discussing some matter of mutual importance. When she found him proof against all the temptation she was mistress of, pique

succeeded her other feelings and led her to try his temper.

" I had heard much of the surpassing beauty of your wife, but it seems that she has been unable to retain your love.—What have you done with Doris? Where is the damsel you conveyed to Straton's Tower after the Triumvir had left it?"

He was annoyed and rejoined;

" Ah, Cleopatra, you may smile, but I deserved a better return for leading Antony to Straton's Tower, than the loss of my rich territory round Jericho."

The amorous queen archly replied;

" I would console you for the loss, and heal your heart with the balm of love, in payment for the balsam of your fields."

" Ah illustrious queen, you have an inexhaustible treasure wherewith to liquidate the debts you owe to many a sighing king, but I desire a more substantial payment than fleeting love."

" I would not, Herod, be unjust, and so will send you a few crocodiles to stock the

Jordan, and some camels to traverse this level country."

"Nor would I be so cruel as to separate the former from their congenial countrywoman, the glories of the realm; your mutual tears at parting would make the Nile overflow its banks: send the camels, laden with love epistles, to Antony, or to some poor Syrian, they will fan the flame of the one, and be balm to the wounded heart of the other."

Cleopatra bit her lip and blushed at these rough replies, and yet continued;

"I made you a generous offer, for which I expected no return, since the kind Doris, the beauteous Mariamne, nor the damsel at Straton's Tower could retain your heart for a few short months.—You have been lately made a king, and so rightly follow the bright example of the wisest prince that ever filled the throne of Israel. He married an Egyptian princess; indeed the learned Rabbis say, that his drama was written to celebrate her beauty."

"I am no poet, but when as great a cause shall excite me, perchance I may turn songster too."

" Methinks Herod 'twould be an eagle's note."

" Hold, queen, we should not sing in concert, your voice would be far too high for me, your flights too rapid—I must sing under another standard."

" What, desert your allegiance Herod?"

" To Antony—yes—when you renounce him, but not till then."

" When I renounce that noble ruler of the world, I will seek protection from the valiant Herod."

" You must pay him then for protection with his balsam gardens; that, queen, shall be the first article of our treaty."

" Nay, you avaricious man—love first, afterwards, if you require it, I will pay you."

" What with?" asked the king somewhat more annoyed with her perseverance.

" With love and sweet words."

" Ah Cleopatra, such payment may do for the noble-minded Antony, but I should prefer my balsam gardens."

" We will not quarrel about these fields—you

shall have your balsam gardens again for a trifling annual tribute, — What will you give me?"

" I accept your offer, and will pay you double the tribute you require."

" Well what will you give me?"

" I will of course pay you in your own current coin—love and sweet words."

" Fie, you prodigal. I will obtain Mariamne's consent before I sign the treaty. If she agrees, and Doris accords with her, and you can ensure the favourable countenance of the damsel in Straton's Tower, we will sign the treaty."

" The assent of the lady of the Tower I have; for you know that Cleopatra only has been there."

She interrupted him, and added;

" I think the matter may be considered as settled; for I see that Mariamne would not care about her consent: and as to Doris, she always did as she was ordered."

Herod quickly answered;

" Our bargain, as you say, is complete; so you have only to transfer the gardens, and I will

directly pay you as much of the tribute as can be justly desired."

Cleopatra feigned surprise, and smiling, replied;

"I entirely forgot—It will be necessary to obtain Antony's consent—Shall I use my influence with him? He will not be angry with you. Why look so serious? Think you that he will?"

"Queen, you exact too much; in truth you deal hardly with me. Shall we descend, and visit the theatre, or command the musicians and dancers to attend?"

"You may go to Straton's Tower, if you please; I shall go to Mariamne, and tell her the offer you have made me for the balsam gradens."

They descended together. Salome joined them in the spacious court, and was immediately led by Cleopatra towards the Armon. On the way she told Salome the substance of what she was going to communicate, who instantly perceived the pain she must inflict, and gladly conducted her to the apartment of the queen, jocularly exciting her to pursue her purpose. She declined entering the apartment herself,

but after introducing the queen, did obeisance, and retired.

Mariamne partially raised herself from the cushions on which she was reclining, but did not welcome her visitor. This reception did not abash the intruder, who came with the intention of revenging what she considered the insults she had received. She sunk with a careless air on a cushioned couch near Mariamne, and thus began;

"It grieves me to see that the roses of health have left your cheek; alas, you are as worn and wan as one who had traversed the burning desert, or perchance one who had pined from hopeless love. I came to tell you, that I have been discussing a matter of some import with your husband, beneath the Tabernacle, on the summit of the Palace."

Mariamne made no reply; the blood began to flush her cheek, but she restrained her indignant feelings, and changed them to contempt, which was, against her inclination, somewhat expressed by her mouth. Cleopatra observed it, but knew too well the symptoms of a wounded

heart not to be certain that she could pour, by her pretended jocularity, some burning drops on it which would add to her anguish. Dermah stood behind Mariamne, and was calmly scrutinizing the Egyptian's countenance, who thus continued;

"Herod is more than angry at Antony's compelling me to take the balsam gardens at Jericho, so I have offered to let him have them for an annual tribute. What do you think it is?"

Mariamne calmly replied;

"Queen of Egypt, it must be more than you have any right to receive, since the territory is neither yours nor Antony's to give. Even the Triumvir cannot bestow what he has unjustly taken by force of arms."

"Since you are both so hurt at losing these few fields, if Antony will permit me I will gladly return them. The tribute offered me I never will receive without your consent,—I directly told your husband so."

Then, affecting jocularity, laughingly added;

"Doris too must give her approbation. Now

can you believe that he offered to pay me a tribute in sweet words and love?"

Mariamne coldly, and with some dignity, replied;

"No, I do not believe it; and have sound reasons for my incredulity."

"Your people are celebrated for their incredulity, so I could expect no more from you. But I assure you, his offer went still farther; he proposed double the tribute: but you know that I cannot in honour accept it without his *wives* consent, and I have added the approbation of the damsel in Straton's Tower."

At these last words Mariamne's eyes were fixed upon the queen, her cheek was crimsoned, and she became greatly agitated. Cleopatra feigned concern, and approaching her, said, in a tone of affected tenderness;

"Alas, I have struck too tender a chord; but forgive me,—it is only an idle tale I heard. Why are you so deeply agitated? The Tower is a mere ruin now. Were you ever there?"

Mariamne looked at her as if she would read her inmost thoughts, then proudly answered;

"No; but I suspect my name has been foully used, and some vile substitute placed there instead of me. Do you know who that was, and for what purpose? It must have been a shameless one, or it would not need so much secresy."

Cleopatra laughed, as she replied;

"You have not much reason to be annoyed. We Egyptians know more of the strategy of love than you do. Will you consent to the payment of Herod's tribute?"

Mariamne rose from her couch, and glancing a look of indignation and contempt on the abandoned queen, left the apartment followed by Dermah.

Cleopatra rejoined Salome, and though mortified at Mariamne's conduct, merely remarked, that the pride of the Asmoneans had not been over-rated. On the following day, no one was permitted to enter the royal armon, at which Herod was pleased, because he considered the refusal as arising from mortification on the part of Mariamne, and therefore made no request for admission.

Banquets, trials of military skill, public spec-

tacles, and games, were celebrated in honour of the royal visitor. Herod seized the opportunity of securing the suffrages of the soldiers and the mass of the population, by his prodigality and apparent kindness. The illness of Mariamne was felt by the people, notwithstanding the great attempts that were made to occupy their attention. This the king perceived, and suffered some uneasiness at any one being held in as great consideration as himself.

On the evening of the third day, Cleopatra left Jerusalem, accompanied by Herod and a numerous escort. Besides the cavalry, were many beasts of burden, with tents, and every luxury the country could afford. When the night closed in, the leading bands lighted their vessels of pitch and flax, and bore them aloft on long poles. The bands of musicians whyled away the tedious hours of the march by songs and the sounds of numerous instruments. On the signal for resting being made, centinels spread themselves along the open plain, hundreds of attendants unloaded the animals and raised the royal tents, while others more imme-

diately about the person of the queen were ready to spread the costly carpets, prepare the bath, sprinkle the liquid odours, light the incense, and put in order the refreshing viands, so that when the royal cavalcade reached the spot, every thing was found, that luxury could devise, to refresh them after their weary march. Having reached Beer-ramoth the king escorted his guest across the river and bade her farewell on the confines of her country. He waited until the last of her retinue could no longer be distinguished from a lofty eminence, then sped his way back to Jerusalem.

CHAPTER XIX.

ALTHOUGH Mariamne did not suppose that her husband's affections had been won by Cleopatra, she was indignant at his attempt to annoy her by his marked attentions to her, and was angry at being made subject to the insults of this abandoned woman. The conduct of her husband towards her had blighted all her hopes, and his increasing suspicion of every person of worth and influence, and the numerous sudden executions and confiscations, filled her mind with terrible apprehensions. During his temporary absence from the capital, she prepared herself for the interview, that must take place on his return.

Dermah by her conversation and firmness of nature, excited her to greater exertion both of

mind and body; while her affection for her children made her determined to exasperate, as little as possible, the fierce and mistrustful monarch. She could not help believing that he still loved her, but she saw too clearly, that the possession of power, the want of principle, and dependance on Providence, had broken down the few restraints which had existed over his mind, and that he was rushing onward in a gradually increasing career of cruelty and sin. Her sense of duty prompted her to wish to try and win him back to the paths of peace, while her judgment told her that the attempt would be fruitless.

The aged Cypros was more than usual in her armon, and busied herself with the children, and was evidently concerned at the alteration in her person and manner, and often tried to cheer her with promises of happiness to come; she even severely censured her son, and spoke with feelings of resentment against Cleopatra, and condemned the unjust hostility of Salome, which was now publicly commented on. It seemed as if habitual piety, and a deep conviction of the emptiness of all human possessions, had pro-

duced a state of mind, that rendered her perceptions of right and wrong instinctively certain and quick, accompanied with a fearless resolution of acting as these dictates directed her. Dermah soon discerned that her actions were sincere, and the genuine results of that mental state which those hastening away sometimes possess, and used her conviction as a means to soothe and even influence the queen.—Hyrcanus and Cypros met oftener than before, and often conversed with painful composure on their approaching dissolution, since both were far advanced in years.

Salome, not having access to the queen, had thought it prudent to retire from Jerusalem and wait the event of the approaching interview between Herod and Mariamne. Alexandra was still under the partial controul of a confidential officer of Herod's, and added much to the unhappiness of her daughter by her ceaseless complaints and indiscreet abuse of the king. She had addressed Cleopatra during her visit, but they were all ignorant of the purport and result of the application. Babarrah had been sedulously separated from his wife and so prevented

from guiding them by his counsel, and checking the king by his presence, for Herod could not help being restrained by the wisdom, virtue, and courage, of such a man: his presence it is true was daily more irksome to him, since no man can endure to live under the scrutiny of continual disapprobation when conscious of deserving it, yet too weak to profit by the lesson, and not yet hardened enough to remove the individual by violent means.

About this time the affairs of the Roman world had reached an acme of confusion that made it evident Cæsar and Antony would contend for the dominion. Herod was preparing to assist the latter, who falsely confiding in his strength, directed him to wage war with the king of Arabia: before he set off on this expedition he returned to Jerusalem.

Mariamne made no preparations for his reception, but remained shut up in her private rooms. His love for her was still a pervading feeling, and though he had lately conducted himself in a manner not calculated to inspire that opinion, he was anxious to restore harmony between himself

and his queen. After traversing the court and receiving the congratulations of the officers of state, and courtiers, he passed on to the armon, mortified at the queen not being there. Attendants warned her of his approach, she did not appear to heed it, but continued instructing her eldest child in some portion of the law. She was yet pale, and a settled calmness overspread her brow. He opened the folding curtains, and with conciliatory feelings quickly advanced to embrace her. She arose and received his embrace without warmth, and without return, while a tear filled her eye, that hung awhile among the long lashes, then fell upon his hand which held hers. He was agitated, and with some emotion said;

"My beloved Mariamne, why receive your husband thus? Alas, there are cares enough in life without unnecessarily adding to them."

She raised her eyes, the deep melancholy expressed by them was not lightened by the most transient feeling of pleasure at his words, and gently replied;

"I, a suspected wife, after being exposed to

the insults of a murderess and a shameless woman, and made a scorn of my people by your conduct towards me, could receive you in no other way. The cares of life are either, for the most part, our own producing, or have their origin in the effects of others' errors—my woes spring from both these sources, the greater number from your proceedings."

Her look, the manner with which she accompanied these words, and the temporary feelings of contrition that crossed his mind, revived his love, and he would have pressed her to his bosom, but she withdrew, saying;

" I was not born to play the hypocrite; before I can receive your kindness, I must not only be assured of your perfect confidence, be restored to my honours with becoming respect, but screened from any farther attacks of my enemies: it is not my nature to endure insult at one time and affection at another, according to your caprice: I am not to be made the object of foul and cruel suspicion to day, and the cause of your shedding an uncle's innocent blood, and on the morrow the object of your earthly love—

I prefer death to such degradation—Oh how opposite are such insults, such deeds, from all you professed and promised me, when an inexperienced woman I listened to your addresses."

Towards the conclusion of this speech her words were in a more animated tone, but her expression was still unaltered. Herod was disturbed, and love was contending with his native violence, while an earnest desire to regain, on any terms, her forgiveness, quickly found a place in his mind, and called into action his dissimulation; after some hesitation he said in a conciliating manner;

" Instead of thus harshly condemning me, you should, my much loved Mariamne, have drawn a veil before those errors, which arose from my surpassing love for you—I have erred, but again I say that error was caused by an over-mastering passion for you."

In the same tone and with a similar calmness she anwered;

" True affection has no such effects; the first proof of its existence is confidence, the next preferring the beloved object to ourself, the last

proofs are tenderness, forbearance, and respect; when I see these effects in you, then I shall suppose you love me; but until then, I shall still conclude that you love yourself, while you falsely suppose that you have this true affection for me."

She ceased, and he thus answered;

" Nature has bestowed on you a cooler temperament than on me; you judge of these effects from yourself; exert, for a time, your understanding, and you will discern, that in me love would be evinced by such uncontrouled actions as I have committed; and for which I seek forgiveness."

Mariamne was agitated, for she could not hear unmoved a husband own his error and ask forgiveness: her natural tenderness and pride were contending; he should not have given her reason time to act, and perhaps all would have been well; but he waited gazing on her: she suddenly assumed for a moment a more animated look and rejoined;

" Were your feelings uncontrouled, or uncontroulable? if, the former, you made the object

of your affection, that of your ungoverned rage and despicable resentment. If you plead the latter, I at once refuse to become the victim of insanity. Herod, did your uncontrouled feelings lead you to suspect me, upbraid me, and stamp in indelible characters a scene of blood upon my memory? Did your uncontroulable feelings induce you to listen to calumny; confine and insult an Asmonean Princess who was once your benefactor; degrade your wife by bringing her for an associate a woman polluted with crime—a foul wretch reeking with a murdered brother's blood—one whose uncontroulable ambition burst the tenderest ties of nature, and led her, from motives of policy, to poison a young and unoffending sister? Did these uncontroulable feelings make you try to subdue Mariamne's spirit, by dallying with such a mass of depravity? If you thought so, you were indeed mistaken, and know nothing of my nature. I felt pity for you as my husband; I was mortified that *he* should act so. As a man and a monarch I looked on your mean proceedings with abhorrence and contempt. Ah, I see your eyes are flashing with

rage, and your cheeks are becoming suffused with blood. Controul or not, this rising wrath, poor Mariamne cannot now be much affected with it if it bursts on her, nor flattered if justice and reason for once get the mastery over you."

She looked on him with intenseness for some seconds, then exclaimed;

"Herod, O Herod, you are rushing headlong to perdition; crime, misery, and the gulph of damnation are wide spread before you. O seek the forgiveness of your blood-stained crimes from our heavenly Father—look to him for assistance and support."

Then, in a voice of tenderness and supplication, she added;

"Come kneel with me, and I will pray for you, with you, and we will again be happy, at least while I stay. Do those words startle you? I say so, because last night when deep sleep was on me, the radiant spirit of my brother beckoned me to Paradise; his noble mien partook of angelic grace; his beauteous brow beamed with celestial dignity; he called me away, and Zillah stood afar and opened her arms as if to court

my embrace. I long to flee away and be at rest with them. Come, Herod, kneel with me, their good spirits and our ministering angels will inspire us with holy thoughts. Ah, why do you look so pale? Why do you tremble so? What makes the perspiration thus trickle from your brow? Herod, Herod—"

He took her hand as he said with faultering voice;

"I—I cannot bear to hear you; there was something prophetic in the sound of your words. I cannot, dear, hear you talk of death.—I mean of your dying. I—I will not—"

He burst into an immoderate flood of tears, and fell upon her neck. Mariamne was surprised, and wept with him, and consoled him; then lifted her child, who cried because he saw his parents weep, and embracing him, presented him to his father, round whose neck he threw his little arms and cried, from natural sympathy, he knew not why. Herod was overcome; and for a short period all the fast waning better feelings of his nature seemed revived. Mariamne saw it, gently sent her child away, and opening

her arms affectionately embraced her husband, ignorant of the true cause of his dreadful agitation; and again, with irresistible softness, tried to win him back to the paths of righteousness and peace. She prayed, and listened to hear her words repeated from his lips.—He trembled, the words faultered on his tongue, and he sunk down in an agony of grief, and wept aloud. She permitted the violence of his grief to be exhausted before she spoke; but during this time, her soul was in fervent prayer for him. It was some time before he recovered even a partial state of composure, when he tenderly embraced her, and went to his own cabinet, as if to commune with himself.

Her abhorrence of the crimes of Cleopatra, and her accidental reference to her murdered brother, had roused the slumbering vengeance of his conscience, attended with the sudden terror of detection by the only being he really loved; his superstitious feelings had been also awakened at the same time by the incidental mentioning of her dream, and for a time remorse, anguish, and almost despair, assailed him. He cast him-

self on the ground, wept, beat his bosom, and recalled every minute circumstance attending the deaths of Aristobulus and Zillah, and upbraided himself with every term of reproach. In the paroxysm of his repentance, he was on the point of denouncing himself, and demanding death;—the shame of exposure alone prevented him. When the force of his feelings was somewhat exhausted, the suspicion of detection flashed across his mind, and some infernal spirit prompted the idea of removing the possibility of discovery. That thought he shuddered at, and rejected; and some tears forced their way from his eyes, at feeling himself sunk so low as to have for an instant allowed the cursed thought to occupy his mind. It was night before he was restored to his usual state; he sought Mariamne, humbled himself, asked her forgiveness, and obtained it with the declaration, that "as confidence was slow of growth, she should not feel dependence until his actions were according to the laws of their holy faith." Their children were brought, and Mariamne dared to think for a moment that there might yet be days

of happiness in store for her. Cypros joined them, and by her simplicity and piety, shewed how sincerely she rejoiced in their reconciliation. On the next day Herod ordered a splendid banquet, and invited Hyrcanus, Alexandra, and his own family, and many nobles. The most precious offerings were brought with his own hand to his queen, and the most distinguished marks of honour shewn her. He even publicly declared her from the throne, the regent of the kingdom, during his absence to carry on the Arabian war.

CHAPTER XX.

The Arabians, aware of his intention to wage war on them, had advanced to Lod with a considerable army. Near that place he engaged and routed them, and they retreated to Kanah, where another army was soon collected. The king tried to follow up the advantages he had gained, and led on his men flushed with victory. The enemy was discomfited and giving way, when Athenio, Cleopatra's General, and an ally, by her orders traiterously attacked a flank of Herod's army, which so dismayed them, and gave such fresh courage to the Arabians, that they were routed and dispersed with great slaughter. Herod collected all he could find of the remainder; and being aware that the Arabians had mustered all their forces, marched im-

mediately towards the frontiers of their country, to compel the victorious army to relinquish their intention of marching against Jerusalem, and make them return to their own territory to defend it against his predatory attacks.

He had not long been encamped among the mountains, before his army was so considerably increased, that he determined, by a circuitous march, to try and surprise their capital, and seize on the treasure he might find in his route. To effect this end, he marched towards the confines of the desert, provided with every necessary which could facilitate his enterprise. It was absolutely necessary to ascertain the state of the enemy's country before he proceeded; therefore he ordered his army to encamp in a wood of oaks, and palms, and sycamores, near the foot of a mountain, whence gushed a cool refreshing spring, while spies and scouts were dispatched to obtain the required information. His advanced bodies were on the very edge of the desert, lest the wandering tribes should rush down on him unawares. Many days had elapsed, and neither the spies nor scouts returned. Herod

became anxious, and dispatched others in search of them, some of whom in two or three days came in without any intelligence of their companions. The men were becoming insubordinate, mistrustful, and discontented, for they had a secret dread of the desert. The king perceiving this, and hearing the same from his officers, determined on marching along the edge of it, and entering the country of the enemy in the rear of their army, while another numerous division should keep them employed on the Judæan side. This plan being arranged, they moved forward, and soon reached a region of sand and stones, intersected with mountains of every size and form, all dry and sterile, a few burnt up thorns and crumbling plants, were all this horrid place afforded; and a dread and dreary silence reigned around.

Herod had not received the account of the army near Samaria having advanced; until then he could not proceed. He cheered his men, held out to them the highest hopes of reward and plunder, and praised and promoted all those who were sanguine and obedient.

While encamped near a spring waiting for the arrival of messengers, or the return of the scouts, a distant and wide spread whirring sound was heard, soon followed by a gloom like the awful light of an eclipse ; this sound became like " the noise of chariots on the mountain tops," and the gloom increased : the fearful sounds continued with deeper darkness, until they became like rushing flames of fire devouring the stubble ; the soldiers were all downcast, they were pained at heart and their faces " gathered blackness ;" for they knew that this cloud of locusts was stronger than a mighty army in battle array, and would leave their fields a desolate wilderness. They watched the direction of their flight as the noise decreased and the light returned, but no man among them smiled.

Towards evening the heat became intense, and the stillness of the atmosphere silenced every tongue ; the animals looked towards the desert raised their nostrils and became restless. Towards the west was seen, through a wide opening between some lofty ground, a boundless extent of arid sand ; close above the horizon

was a thick veil of dark and sullen clouds; every eye was turned to watch the descending sun; in an instant the clouds were rent into a thousand unequal long and narrow lines, and a disk of unusual magnitude was displayed: the distant clouds were gilded with deep toned light, while separated numbers of diverging rays of the most brilliant hues rose on high and vanished at the zenith of the heavens. The mingled tints spread along the ground and illumined the army variously arrayed either in armour, or dresses of their country calculated for defence.

As soon as darkness veiled the heavens, there appeared the similitudes of fires on the edge of the horizon and the men hastened to marshal themselves in battle array, believing that their enemies had taken a wider circuit and entoiled them. Their fears were soon dissipated for it was only the stars seen through the misty exhalations floating near the earth, when they rose above them they shone forth in all their splendour. During the night transparent fleecy vapours of bright and snowy whiteness suddenly sprung from the earth to an immeasurable height

and dispersed. Few of the army slept until the morning dawned. Herod consulted the most experienced men among them, who all agreed, that such appearances were forerunners of some dreadful convulsion. They were not mistaken for the sun rose veiled in mist, the air was suffocating and hot; gusts of wind were sometimes felt, but oftener heard in the air high above them. Before mid-day the sun had become of a lurid colour, and blazed with intenser heat and a fearful silence pervaded the desert and the army. The heavens towards the south became imbued with a flame-coloured hue terminating in a violet tint. No sooner was this terrible sign perceived than orders were given to fly towards the mountains. Before that order could be obeyed by the willing yet affrighted men the Samoun passed not far from them, blighting with death all that lay within its track. Before it came, the horses, camels, and other beasts, raised lamentable cries, fell on their knees and buried their nostrils in the sand. Even those in full career proved unmanageable and did the same, and were imitated by their masters.

Herod saw the dismay of his soldiers, and felt his impotence when the messenger of destruction swept along; his sins all flashed into his mind and he was smitten with fear, and recalled the destruction of the Assyrian host whom the messenger of the Lord had thus destroyed.

As soon as this dry fiery blast had gone by, the men hastened to the neighbouring mountains and from thence peered out fearfully upon the desert. A keen hissing noise reached them, and some shadowy forms rose from the horizon and mingled with the skies: soon after some dust and powder fell upon them; and the animals again shewed signs of fear and sorrow. The horizon seemed moving, then thousands of spiring columns rose into the skies and came wheeling onward with horrid fury whizzing and hissing. Before they reached the hills they vanished, and a noise was heard like spent surges rushing up a stony shore. More columns succeeded these, each nearer than the last, till one that towered into the heavens came whirling on, levelling the mountains of sand as it passed and mingling their particles with its spires, and burst

so near the army, that one wail arose and all for a season believed themselves buried beneath this volume and burning sand. Stillness more terror-striking than a tempest followed; the men were recovering and hoping that the worst was over, when the animals and men were cast down and the earth undulated and shook, the springs contiguous were seen to gush out and then retire, the brooks rose above their banks then disappeared, and vast crevices opened as if eager to devour them. Horror and amazement seized them, and they thought that the wrath of heaven was poured out on their land: some screamed, some muttered prayers, while others confessed their sins and called upon their God. They knew not where to go, for subterranean thunder and the general appearance of the country too truly told, that they were not the only sufferers. The night was spent in terror. In the morning an armed man was seen on a distant hill riding towards them, he was brought to Herod and told him of the dreadful ruin of cities and men, and that Antony had been reported to be at Actium. By the time he had marched his army to Jerusa-

lem messengers met him with the intelligence, that on the day of the dreadful earthquake Antony had been beaten at that fatal field.

Although this information made Herod tremble for his kingdom and desirous of making his peace with Cæsar, he was compelled to recruit and increase his army, and again attack the enemy. After various encounters, he at length drove them within their entrenchments and after displaying his military skill and valour, compelled some to surrender, while the remainder, who preferred death to slavery, emaciated with thirst, rushed out and fell by the sword. This last defeat left them no alternative, and he was chosen ruler of their nation. The day these momentous affairs were settled he proceeded with haste to Jerusalem.

Mariamne received him with kindness, but settled sorrow still sat on her brow and all that he could say was unable to remove it.

Herod and his adherents were apprehensive that Cæsar would avenge his friendship for Antony by depriving him of the kingdom. All his suspicions of others were increased from the fear,

that he might be deprived of his power, wealth, and the means of gratifying his unbounded ambition. The remorse and feelings which had followed his interview with Mariamne, previous to his leaving her for the Arabian war, were effaced ; the apalling scene in the desert, and the effects on him, had been nearly obliterated by his recent victories and prosperity. The dread of being driven from his throne and deprived of what he held most dear, completely erased the last sad remnants of his better nature. He reflected on his present condition, and on all the human means within his reach, to prevent the catastrophe he expected. The first thought that ensued was, " who should succeed him?" Hyrcanus alone was left of all the Asmonean line. There was but one mode of banishing all apprehension from this unsubstantial phantom of his fear; and he resolved, in the dark recesses of a mind capable of such decisions, to act up to the last maxim of human policy, and destroy him. He masked his dire intention beneath the appearance of unusual kindness; his general manner was more conciliating to all about him, and

his conduct and conversation to Mariamne began to inspire her with hope, and she felt the first germs of delusive expectations, only to have them blighted for ever.

Babarrah, whom Herod had employed in negociations, and other state affairs, was again in Jerusalem; and as if endowed with more than human penetration, suspected the king's intention, and boldly recommended Hyrcanus to return at once to Babylon, and thus attempt to remove all suspicion of his views. Dermah even urged this step with the queen, on the grounds, that in case Herod proceeded to Rhodes the people yet attached to him might demand him as their ruler. Mariamne attended to this specious reasoning, and privately advised Hyrcanus and Alexandra to retire for a time to that city. The former rejected her advice as emanating from ideal fears; the latter had, during her retirement, amassed a considerable sum, and was so desirous of spending it at Rome, that she proposed to alter their destination, and proceed there directly. It was in vain combating her inclinations, for she mistook them for the

soundest reasoning. Dermah, who was present, forgot for a moment her usual respect and caution, and remarked;

"To go to Rome at this time would excite jealousy and suspicion in——"

She stopped herself: Mariamne regarded her, and blushed deeply, but made no remark; for it was evident that her unfinished speech had conveyed her thoughts. After this meeting, the queen deemed it prudent to say no more to Alexandra; in private she affectionately tried to persuade Hyrcanus to accede to her wishes: she even proposed that her little son and Dermah should accompany him; but all her entreaties proved useless. The old man desired, above all human things, to see the Temple on Mount Moriah, and die at Jerusalem.

Harp, psaltery, and clarion, sounded their joyful notes, the goblets were crowned with wine; and the honoured guests in splendid raiment reclined at the sumptuous banquet where their king presided, and all was revelry and joy. A tired and dusty courier entered the court, and prostrating himself before the monarch, held to-

wards him a packet of sealed letters; Herod took them, and the messenger retired. This transpired so quickly and tacitly, that but few of the guests observed it. He unrolled the letters, but bit his lip, frowned, and more than once glanced his fierce look on the innocent Hyrcanus. He then appeared to relapse into gloomy thought, and as it were unconsciously, put the letters in his bosom. The sparkling wine was quaffed, fresh viands brought, questions propounded, and dark sayings proposed. Whilst the greater number of the guests were thus occupied, Herod addressed Hyrcanus in the following manner;

"Have you heard lately from your friend Malchus?"

The unsuspecting man replied;

"Once of late he wrote to me letters of congratulation on your great successes, and of salutation to me."

The monarch smiled, though his cheek for a moment lost its colour, and he raised the goblet with a less steady hand; he next enquired;

"Has Malchus sent you any presents in remembrance of your ancient friendship?"

With equal openness, Hyrcanus answered ;

" He sent me not long ago four well-conditioned steeds, to ride on ; but time has stiffened my old limbs, and unnerved my hand, so I have not used them much."

Herod's lip grew pale and trembled, his eyes scowled with uncertain and unfixed looks on the kind old man. He rose hastily from his couch, and exclaimed in a loud and hollow voice, which hushed the guests to instant silence, and filled them with amazement ;

" Thou time-worn hypocrite, thou foul stain on our friendship, thou base blot of the Asmonean line, thou art an accursed traitor. Friends, courtiers, captains listen, but let your indignation keep within due bounds, since we know your zeal. This gray-haired conspirator against my life and throne, has owned that he has held correspondence with Malchus. He says—Oh foul hypocrite ! that these letters were of congratulation on the conquest of our men of valour, and of salutation to himself ; and that his presents were of ambling horses for his pleasure. Our faithful emissaries have intercepted

these congratulatory epistles, and learnt the uses of these steeds. Here are his letters to the Governor Malchus, asking for an asylum, and an escort, that he may take means to obtain the kingdom of Judæa! This loyal governor not only promises him the means, but is already raising forces to dethrone me, and devastate Israel. Ministers of affairs, take these letters, and endeavour to discover what other miscreants are concerned in this horrid plot."

Hyrcanus pale but collected, now attempted to speak, and began by declaring the letters to be forgeries. Herod, with an agitated voice and furious look, vociferated;

"Silence, nor let your tongue utter lies, when on the eve of accounting for such vile treachery and intended murder. Guards, bear him away to instant death:—away with him, and let no man pity him."

The guards seized him. The king refused to hear him, but strode away, loudly calling for his officers to depart with him directly to Rhodes—lest the effects of this foul deed should influence Cæsar, and be injurious to the realm.

Before Hyrcanus death was known even in the Palace, Herod had quitted the city, having previously left his brother Pheroras with the chief direction of the affairs of the kingdom, and given orders to Sohemus and his treasurer respecting the queen and the remainder of his family.

The queen passing from an inner court, heard and saw a stir and whispering among her domestics, with looks of sorrow and surprise; she wondered what had occurred, and had hardly reached her armon when Dermah, with dishevelled hair, and grief and anger declared by her look and voice, rushed in, and cried;

"Woe worth the day; O daughter of Israel,
gird thee with sackcloth;
Mourn, mourn with bitter lamentation;
Woe worth the day; for the spoiler hath passed
by;
Mourn for innocent blood, the blood of the aged
hath been basely shed."

Mariamne clasped her hands in anguish, her lips became pale, and her sight dim, as she exclaimed,

" Woe is me now! for my soul is wearied because of murderers."

As the words passed her lips, she sunk senseless on the pavement. Dermah hastened for assistance. Her little children, who were near, hearing the lamentation, ran in, and seeing their mother pale and senseless on the ground raised their cries of grief, and clung round her, and could scarcely be taken away. Many hours elapsed before Mariamne recovered her consciousness; at first she wildly gazed on those standing or kneeling near; observing their garments rent, and every sign of grief, she hastily half raised herself and gazed upon them as she drew her trembling hand across her brow. Horrid unconnected thoughts came wandering into her mind, and hollow sounds of woe involuntarily issued from her lips. She gazed on them still more intensely, and paused: the dreadful fact flashed upon her memory, she shrieked out "*murder*," and again fell senseless. For many more hours no signs of consciousness could be discovered, scarce those of life; at length mutterings came from her cold pale lips, she shivered,

and some tears gushed from her closed eye-lids. The inhabitants of the Palace were in great consternation, and the people evinced their grief for Hyrcanus, and their concern for their beloved queen, and began to assemble about the courts: the fierce Pheroras ordered them to be dispersed, which only excited them still more.

Dermah had summoned the physician of the queen but he was not to be found: she saw Mazrah among the crowd and immediately introduced him into the Palace. The noise and confusion had attracted Salome, who seeing the Essene led by Dermah into the armon, noted it on the tablets of her memory.

Mazrah knew that she was suffering from sorrow of heart, and seeing her extended on the couch pale, shivering, and at times convulsed, feared lest the effects of this violent shock might be productive of dreadful consequences. He attempted by the aid of pungent odours to rouse her, and succeeded so far as to awaken her; she sat up but yet remained mute with her eyes fixed. He endeavoured by words of the tenderest sympathy to excite her tears, but she paid

no attention. Dermah by his direction summoned the mourners; they came and tried first to call her attention by the distant sounds of low and melancholy music, while in a voice of sorrow some sung;

" Call for the mourning women;
Send for the skilful in songs of sorrow;
Let them hasten and take up a wailing for us."

Her eyes turned towards the sounds, but a vacant look still overspread her brow. The female mourners in tones of woe followed the example of Dermah and sung;

" Behold the tears of the oppressed;
Have they no comforter?"

Others responded to the sounds of distant music;

" On the side of their oppressors is power
So they have no comforter.
Come hasten then and wail with us,
For by sorrow the spirit is broken.
That our eyes may run down with tears,
And our eyelids gush out with waters:
For a voice of wailing is heard out of Zion,

Loud lamentations for the slain of the daughter
of my people."

At these last words she beat the time with her wan fingers, and her bewildered thoughts were returning; yet no tear flowed from her eyes and she seemed unconscious that any one was with her: presently, in a voice of the deepest and most touching melancholy according with the notes of woe, she sung;

" Oh that I had in the wilderness a place of rest—
Of refuge from the men of treachery and blood."

At the sound of her voice the little children, whom Mazrah had ordered to be brought near her, clung round her and cried: their grief attracted her attention; she looked on them and said;

" Weep not my babes, weep not for me."

She pressed them with convulsive sobs to her bosom, which heaved as if too full for utterance, at length in agony she exclaimed as she put them away;

" Blessings on him who taketh them—
Who dasheth my little ones against the stones."

She sobbed and floods of tears followed, and all present mingled their grief with hers: even

the Essene, whose feelings were supposed to be subdued, wept without the power of restraining himself.

Having recalled her to her recollection, he sent the mourners away, and allowed her violent grief to exhaust her then said ;

" Mariamne give ear unto the voice of thy friend—
Behold the hand of the Lord is not shortened that it cannot save
Neither is his ear heavy that it cannot hear.
The Lord giveth and the Lord taketh away,
Let us bless the name of the Lord."

She looked at him and replied ;

" The hand of the Lord hath touched me,
And I am consumed with sorrow—
O that I had wings I would flee away—
Even on the wings of death would I seek rest unto my soul."

She paused then added ;

" Mazrah the paths of peace are the paths of wisdom : simplicity and humility are the raiments of happiness : frugality and labour are the handmaids of health : the light estimation of

worldly things leaves room for the contemplation of heavenly ones, and brings that peace which neither riches, nor power, or glory can produce."

She looked round as if to see who was present, and perceiving only Dermah, said in a low imploring emphatic voice ;

" Mazrah such is the tenour of your life—take my babes to your silent haunts and teach them to trample beneath their feet the vanities of the world, and look with pity and scorn on the Serab * glory, on those messengers of punishment conquerors, and on those snares to every dire and accursed evil, conquest and wealth : teach them to despise and subdue the vile inclinations of mortality and to hold converse with the immortal and better part—Could I insure this for my poor babes I should with joy of soul be gathered unto my fathers."

She wept again over her children. Mazrah consoled her and withdrew.

Although the strictest directions had been given by the king to detain Alexandra as a pri-

* Mirage.

soner; she effected her escape the day after she heard of Hyrcanus murder, and sought the protection of her daughter, to whose misery she greatly added, by her unavailing regrets, and by continually venting her own apprehensions; her unguarded violence began to produce so great effect on the inmates of the Palace, that Pheroras ordered her to be conducted to her former abode.

After the expiration of three days, Mariamne having recovered the effects of the first shock her feelings had sustained, was informed by Sohemus, that Herod had commanded him to conduct her to a fortress near Antioch *, while Cypros and Salome were to sojourn at Massada.

Mariamne received this information without emotion, for though she considered herself as a captive, she was glad, at any sacrifice, to be so far removed from Salome, and equally happy at leaving Jerusalem, where every object excited some harrowing recollection.

She no longer suffered the poignancy of grief,

* Of Alexandria, now Scanderona.

for that was deadened by the approaching calmness of despair: it was impossible for her to be any more deceived by the delusions of hope, or prevented from exercising her judgment by the promises and temporary repentance of her husband: she now saw him in his true character, of a fierce, yet fearful tyrant, gradually becoming more suspicious of worth and ability, even among the poor, and ready to sacrifice all around him from the mere apprehension of their being made obstacles to his retaining the rank and power of a king. The few kind and noble feelings of his nature, having no aid from the exercise of piety, had wasted away; the temporary remorse, and the fair promises he had made to her, were like the flickering flashes of an expiring lamp, strong but momentary, and the apparently last natural efforts to obtain support from an exhausted source.

He had commanded her and Alexandra to be conveyed to so distant a fortress lest their presence and the effect of the death of Hyrcanus, should excite the people to revolt, and induce them to accuse him to Cæsar, and request him to restore the throne to the Asmonean dynasty.

He separated them from his own race because their dissensions were injurious to him.

Mariamne attired herself and summoned Pheroras to her presence. On his first entering the apartment where she sat on a chair of state, he appeared disinclined to pay her obeisance, on which, she with dignity rebuked him, and ordered him either to quit her presence or perform the accustomed homage. The proud savage was reluctantly compelled to obey, and remain in an humble attitude listening to her as she thus addressed him.

"The friends of my departed grandsire have embalmed his body; I am going to a fortress beyond Antioch, under the escort of Sohemus, and my mother under the more immediate protection of our treasurer: it is my determination to convey his body to Modin, the burial place of the illustrious Maccabees. Here is a list of those who are to accompany me; when that escort is prepared I shall leave Jerusalem. By tomorrow at the ninth hour, I expect every thing to be in readiness."

Her manner, and the purport of her speech,

surprised him; at first he was inclined not to obey her mandate, but he knew her resolution, and was aware of the importance of her quitting the capital, and therefore reluctantly obeyed.

The retinue was not numerous; but the people assembled in spite of Pheroras attempts to prevent them, and, remembering the mildness of Hyrcanus government, his sorrows, and disgraceful end, lamented loudly, spoke in their customary enigmatical manner of his bloody death, and referred to his grandson, the young and admired Aristobulus. Mariamne's face was covered, but her agitation was so great as to render support necessary, which added to the excitement of the people, and symptoms of tumult ensued. Some elders soothed them, but neither they nor the guards could prevent a great portion of the population from following the body of Hyrcanus far beyond the city. Many girded up their loins, took their staves, and were resolved to follow it to Modin.

CHAPTER XXI.

ALTHOUGH the procession had advanced more than half way on the night of their departure, the morning sun shewed distinctly the lofty Modin, surmounted by the mausoleum built by Simon for his race. Seven pyramids of polished stone indicated the sepulchre of himself and family. When the people saw the noble monument shining in the morning sun, and reflecting the beams from its polished surface, the glories of the illustrious Asmoneans were recalled, and cries of lamentation and anger were strangely mingled. Pheroras was wroth, and commanded silence, but his orders and his threats were equally unheeded. They toiled on during the day, and when the foot of the mountain was gained, the western rays glanced their level light on the opposite side of the hill, leaving the eastern aspects of the pyramids and the mountain side in clear shadow, which cast its deep

reflection far along the plain, and covered, as with a mourning veil, the sad assemblage. They wound up the steep ascent, and reached the extensive tombs as the departing orb of day tinged the heavens with golden light.

On approaching the great mausoleum the murmurs and cries of the people increased, until Pheroras was on the point of using violence. Mariamne uncovered her pale and woe-worn face, and thus in a clear and melancholy voice addressed them:

"My race was glorious; mighty men of fame;
The memory of their deeds remaineth;
But their fame is covered with darkness.
I weep not for the dead,
For his sorrows are passed away:
I make no mourning for our father,
For he dwelleth in Abraham's bosom:
The Asmonean race hath vanished in gloom,
It hath set in darkness like an evening shadow.—
Forbear ye to cry,
Make no mourning for the dead;
The last of our race is hidden with stealth in the tomb:

His soul was not filled with good,
But sorrow was his earthly portion;
His pilgrimage hath been through a vale of thorns,
A vale ending in darkness and death.—
His name and his race shall be covered with darkness."

As she uttered these solemn words she mantled her face, and pointing to the mausoleum went on. The people obeyed her, and excepting the even tramp, no sound was heard until they reached the entrance of the tomb. A shriek from Alexandra and some of the women attracted the immediate attention of the mourners. A figure with matted locks, a ragged wolfskin round his body, a staff and massive pilum of spikes in his hand rushed out, and bounding on the stone which formed the entrance looked round with frenzied stare: he shook his long grizzled beard, ground his teeth, waved round his head the massive pilum, then in a voice that thrilled in every ear called aloud;

"Is he here? Is the usurper here?
Is the murderer of Aristobulus here?—

No remnant of his race remaining?
I am the *Avenger of Blood* and will slay him—
In the cave of Engedi I warned him—
A spirit among the tombs of the dead forbad him—
Saying, as he rushed by like a vision of light,
'*Thou shalt do no murder*'—
But like the Samoun and pestilence,
Like the angel of sin and death,
Herod hath spared neither the old nor young."

As these words passed his lips Alexandra and Mariamne called out in bitterness of soul; at the same moment the fierce Pheroras exclaimed, as he transfixed the demoniac with his javelin;

"Cursed be the tongue that revileth the king; let him die the death."

The pilum fell from the hand of the dying Menahem, he raised himself on his knee, held the weapon that was in his body and said more faintly;

"Mariamne stay,—nay fly not."

They stood gazing on the dying demoniac. He seemed for a time bewildered then articulated;

"The tormentors leave me; angels beckon me away; the dire delusion's gone, leaving remnants of horrid truths engraven on my soul."

He looked on Mariamne, then added in a voice of sorrow faultering with the gasp of death;

"Lone daughter of misery, destruction waves above thy head his dismal pennons dripping with a brother's, and a grandsire's blood—thy husband slew them and will—"

A sudden spear thrust from Pheroras closed his lips for ever.

Mariamne trembling called out, as she fell into her attendants arms;

"Seize him."

If the foreign satellites about him had not drawn their swords and bent their bows, the people would have well obeyed her orders. Pheroras sternly commanded them to deposit the body and depart, carrying the queen to the place appointed for their night's reception. Dermah refused to obey the order, loudly declaring that, the queen had fainted, and should only be removed from the place of blood. Pheroras was compelled to accede, and she was borne to the neighbouring half-ruined and deserted village Mazrah appeared from among these wretched

abodes, and was immediately summoned to attend her.

The night had advanced before she was well enough to be taken, with her mother, to the tent prepared for her on the plain.

On the succeeding morning she sent a letter to Pheroras requiring him to return, and positively refusing to proceed, if either he or his men remained with them. Sohemus at the same time inferred by his manner that, he was assuming the direction of an affair left by the king to his guidance. Pheroras chief object being gained, that of removing Mariamne from the capital, he unceremoniously retired with his band, leaving them to pursue their journey with Sohemus and the treasurer's escorts.

Doris, who had dwelt, since the marriage of Mariamne, at Samaria, had heard of her intended journey to the fortress near Antioch, and sent messengers with fruits and presents to meet her and invite her to repose and recruit herself at her habitation. She gladly accepted the proposal, for though they had not met since that time, the interchange of presents and kind offices had con-

tinued between them. The intelligence of Herod's tyranny and the deaths of Aristobulus and Hyrcanus were also known to her, and had excited in her some mistrust. On the queen approaching Samaria a great assemblage of people came out to meet her, and testified their feelings by their words and manner. Special messengers came from Doris to conduct them, and to offer welcome to Mariamne. No sooner had they, according to the custom, knocked at the portals, than they were thrown open, and Doris first assisted Mariamne to alight, then received her in her arms and they wept in silence on each others neck. They retired together, when she brought her refreshing water and washed both her hands and feet and anointed her with odours, and comforted her. Mariamne was sensibly affected at her kindness and could not refrain from shedding tears as she said;

"Grief levelleth all distinctions, the proud and the poor in sorrow of heart, will meet and forget their wrongs: the separated will unite; and the enemies forgive and embrace. O Doris I never wronged you in thought or deed; all

things are in the hands of God, it hath pleased him to afflict me with sorrows that I cannot number and with fear of heart I cannot name: He will hear the cry of the fatherless and oppressed and give rest unto my soul. If in days that are past, before experience was mine, I thought Israel demanded me to sacrifice myself for her, and so brought sorrow to your heart, forgive your handmaid, forget your injuries, and let me share the solace of your friendship during the days which I must sojourn here; they are numbered for my heart is broken with sorrow, though my soul is not, nor shall not be, subdued."

Doris embraced her, replying;

"As Ruth clave unto Naomi so will I cleave unto thee—I know thou wert sore pressed, and that thy heart misgave thee when thou becamest the wife of Herod. I felt as thou wouldest, if thou hadst been a repudiated wife; if the wicked Salome had not prompted me we should never have disputed. Now let us mingle our tears and seek comfort in our sorrows; we will remain here together."

The escort with Alexandra approached, and

Doris was compelled to leave the queen to receive her. She performed every customary rite of hospitality, and even gave the first cold draught from the deep well to the thirsty horse that bore her guest. The attendants had a banquet prepared for them; but as the days of mourning had not expired, they remained within the armon. The affection of Doris and the tranquillity did much towards composing Mariamne, and enabling her to collect her thoughts, and prepare herself for any events that might occur.

Babarrah had escorted her children to the fortress, and sent to inform her that the castle was prepared for her reception. She was desirous of seeing her infants; and also hastened her departure, since Salome was on her route to Samaria, previous to her proceeding to Massada. She thought but little of the region through which she passed, though it was celebrated at every step for the deeds of warriors, and the wonders performed in days long gone. On descending into the vale of Daphne, a crowd of unexpected thoughts rushed into her mind, and she almost unconsciously took a retrospective

view of all that had happened to her from her fears of that mighty ruler, who was now with his vile paramour, driven from their high estate, and struggling for existence.

Salome had contrived to visit Samaria, for the purpose of obtaining all the information she could relative to Herod, the queen, and the affair at Modin, of which much had been rumoured abroad. She had been for some time in great anxiety lest Cæsar should dethrone her brother, for having zealously supported his rival, in which case she thought it more than probable, that the diadem would be restored to Alexandra, as the only remaining person of the regal race, which would effectually reduce her to a lower station, and prevent her accomplishing her unaltered determination, to wreak her vengeance on the wretched Mariamne.

Doris and Mariamne parted with increased mutual affection, and with the promise of the latter to sojourn again with her when she returned to Jerusalem.

After Mariamne left the capital, Salome had obtained access to the Palace, and was desirous of penetrating into her private apartments; but

was prevented by an old and faithful chamberlain, who respectfully but firmly told her, that his orders from the queen were positive, and therefore she could not be permitted to enter that part of the Palace. She returned a malicious smile, and muttered as she departed;

"This queen excludes me from my brother's house."

Her spies had ascertained, that Mazrah had been found at Modin, and consequently must have preceded her; she knew also that he had been at Samaria, but when he quitted the city, where he had gone, she could not discover. These facts she treasured up in her mind, as important weapons, and waited with impatience for her brother's return; although during the interval she did not cease trying to add to her information, or employing her thoughts in arranging what she possessed, that she might use it to the best advantage. She tried every art to win Doris to her opinions, and exerted all her cunning to ascertain what had passed between them. When she had effected her purpose, she quitted Samaria for the fortress of Massada.

CHAPTER XXII.

Sohemus and the treasurer had exceeded their instructions, by permitting the queen and her mother to remain at Samaria; they had consulted on the subject, and thought it wiser to accede to any wishes their prisoners, for so in fact they were, might express, lest they should be frustrated in the execution of their orders to get them safely within the fortress.

Mariamne had been perfectly aware of the intention; and as she entered a portal of the castle, turned to her guards, and said;

"I knew that I was your prisoner; had it been my wish to return to Jerusalem, or go elsewhere, it was not in your power to have prevented me."

They looked at each other. The queen passed

on through the dry close courts, where the lively lizard alone seemed happy, and darted from its retreat in the mouldering walls on its insect prey; some wretched captives stared, but did her homage as she passed, and then resumed their limited and allotted walk. In every court were swarthy centinels, in savage dresses, and with uncouth arms. No sounds were heard but their tread and challenge, excepting when at intervals the distant uproar of mingled shouts and curses came from some subterranean, or far retired caserne, as if the gaming stake was won and lost. Some bold and hardened female now and then was seen to look from the narrow grates, and coarsely call her companions within to come forward and view the uncommon sight. They ascended a steep and circuitous stair, which terminated in a spacious court, surrounded by the backs of lofty buildings: here were many female captives who had been sent in by an advanced legion, and were preserved for them until they returned: many of them were evidently women above the common order, all seemed depressed; and some were the victims of misery.

When they saw Mariamne, they at first looked, then prostrated themselves on the pavement, most of them weeping: one among them rushed forward, and falling at Mariamne's feet, kissed the hem of her garment, and exclaimed;

"Queen of Judæa, the Lord be with thee, have mercy on thy handmaid Tezellah, and save her from hopeless degradation and misery."

Mariamne stepped towards her, and raising her, touched her shoulder, and replied;

"Thanks be to the God of Israel for this blessing; I am a prisoner too; but perhaps our keeper's orders relating to me are not so barbarous but that I may redeem my handmaid."

Sohemus, placing his hand upon his bosom, answered;

"Peace attend the queen; we are her servants ready to obey her."

She immediately demanded the liberation of Tezellah, adding, that if she found on examination she had not been shamefully treated, she would pay a fit ransom to the captor. When the other women heard Mariamne's name, they raised a wail of misery, and besought her pro-

tection. One had been torn from the bosom of her husband murdered for defending her; another had seen her infants call to her for aid from amid the flames of their dwelling, but had been manacled and could not help them; others had been caught at their wells and borne away; and many mourned the loss of those they were betrothed to. They covered their heads with their mantles, and wept in their misery. Mariamne looked on them, as the tear drops fell from her eyes, and said;

"Children of sorrow, I have no power to help you, or I have the will.—I can only weep with you."

She turned to Sohemus and the officers who followed her, and added;

"Are these the trophies of your legions valour?—The weaker vessels whom God commanded ye to love and cherish, and protect from insult! O man, what a paltry wretch thou art. Strip your boasted war and glory of the veil before it; and what remains?—Systematic murder, and every brutal passion, tinselled with the pride of prowess, and the vanity of

necessary privations. What are ye mighty captains of the world? Men who possess greater skill and activity than their comrades in putting to death their fellow-creatures; and are arrayed either in the mantle of purblind ambition, or in the livery of knaves or tyrants. Nay, fume not, nor shake your crested helmets; what I have said, is *true*. When men stand forth to maintain their religion and territories from licensed plunderers, they do deserve the meed of glory. Alas, even then the viler feelings are all ready, like blood-hounds to slip their feeble leashes, and make poor helpless woman their fated quarry. If you dare to doubt, look before me and receive the lie."

She covered her face; the helpless women wept aloud, and with contemptuous cries of grief and anger, made the crested heroes blush and fret, and feel ashamed. She passed on closely followed by Tezellah, traversed a lofty terrace, and entered that portion of the fortress allotted to her.

Babarrah had taken care, that this spacious strong hold should be made as convenient as

possible, and availing himself of Herod's unlimited order, had ransacked Antioch for every luxury, and even had earth and aromatic shrubs conveyed to the space near her room, that she might not look on the dreary sameness of moats and walls, and unadorned buildings, of various and equally uninteresting forms. Her little children greeted her with cries of joy which overcame her, and she was glad to retire into the recesses of her new apartments, and there refresh herself, and listen to the innocent account of their journey, of which their little minds were full.

The next day, when all the inmates were asleep, she summoned Tezellah, and bade her relate what had happened to her since she fled from Massada. The girl related as follows ;

" Blessed be thou of the Lord my kind and generous queen. I fled because that serpent Salome wished to enthral me, and the wicked Ananeel to make me unfaithful to the queen. First I tried to find the glen of the Essenes, but was unable, and wandered for many days, until I reached the shores of the Dead Sea. There

an aged woman and her husband accepted my services, and I dwelt with them. Time passed on, and my desire to hear of those I left at Massada increased so much, that I oftentimes went to the well, and accosted the passengers with such questions as seemed best calculated to obtain the intelligence I longed for, without creating any suspicion. One morning, soon after day-break, I was drawing water, when a tall and beautiful Essene called to me by name; I startled, turned, and saw Mazrah. My first questions were concerning the mistress whom I love and honour."

Here she kissed the hem of her garment and wept. Mariamne held out her hand, which she fervently pressed to her lips, then to her forehead, and renewed her tale with greater spirit;

"He told me many things that had happened to you, and that you were married. Will the queen let me narrate all that next occurred to me? I know not if I should; yet truth has always seemed to me the wiser and safer course."

Mariamne was interested, and bade her proceed.

" Mazrah said to me, ' damsel, canst thou keep a secret, and serve the queen ?' I scarcely deigned to say more in answer, than if he doubted it or me, not to trust me. He thought for a time, then said, I will see thy mistress ; meet me here at sunset. What passed between them, I know not ; she told me to obey him. I was at the spring waiting for him ; before he came, some other damsels arrived ; at length he appeared, and courteously asked me for a draught of water. As I gave the pitcher to him, he whispered, ' be ready to go with me the second hour of the second watch.' It was a fearful time to leave my home ; but with Mazrah I felt safe, and then I could have dared any thing for my queen. He came at the second hour, and taking me by the hand, led me to the shore, placed me in a little boat, seized the oars, and in a moment his giant strength hurried the bark along with great speed. The moon was rising over the Arabian hills, and shed a stream of golden light across the sea, and lightened all the shore ; suddenly the bark inclined towards the beach, and when I thought that we were about to land

again, he rowed with greater speed down a narrow creek, at the end of which was a lofty cavern. I was afraid, and besought him to stop; but he replied, 'fear not, the God of Israel is our guide and hath willed what his servants shall do.' This consoled me, and gave me more courage, though my heart misgave me when I saw the crags high above me, and heard the echo of the plashing oars within the lofty cavern. The moon beams shot far into this subterranean river, and served to make the rugged crags and gloomy recesses more frightful to look at. Again the vessel turned; Mazrah bade me not to fear, as we glided down a narrow channel in deep darkness, he no longer used the oars, but kept his staff extended, and gently prevented the boat from running against the sides: at length a slight sudden shock, and the rushing up of the water, proved that we had landed. Again he took my hand, and said, 'come with me, and if you see any one you know and hear strange words, heed them not, until you hear a plot for murder, then scream with horror and rush down the path up which I now will take

you, and wait here for me—again I tell you fear not, for no one can discover you.' I toiled up a winding path, quite dark, holding by his hand: at last I saw a glimmering light and heard wild maniac mutterings; and directly afterwards passed through a narrow crevice in the rock, and found myself on a platform formed of a ledge of stone screened from observation, at the side of an enormous cavern; far below me I saw, near a gushing spring, a large fire, and by it a man clothed in skins, muttering and crying: the blaze and smoke rose high, but notwithstanding, I could not see the top, nor far on any side. I stood concealed from the possibility of discovery, and soon heard the echo of approaching footsteps: my fear was excited, when on looking round for Mazrah he was not there. The footsteps approached, and I thought that he was coming, when, guess my surprise at seeing—May I tell you?"

The queen, whose curiosity was excited, said quickly;

"Yes, whatever it may be."

"O my adored mistress, I saw Herod and

Babarrah emerge from the dreadful gloom, and approach the man who was near the blazing fire.''

Mariamne's lip grew pale, but she commanded her to go on.

" He spoke to him of prophecy, and other awful things; then promised him great rewards. He approached still nearer, and I saw by the flame light that his face was pale, and that he trembled, yes, the mighty Herod trembled; my heart beat when I saw this scene below me, and not far from the king, the calm Babarrah, gazing on him with a look, that seemed to read the deepest secrets of his soul: that look made me quake, for I was sure that he would not dare to fix his eyes so on the king, if something dreadful was not thought of. The very recollection makes me feel afraid."

Mariamne, who had wrought herself up to hear whatever might be told, said in a calm voice tinctured with command;

" Go on."

" Oh my well-beloved mistress, he went nearer, and asked if he should reign long; who were

his enemies—and—and—if your brother would deprive him of the throne—the maniac answered him in loud warning words; the flames from the fire rose higher, and the night birds screamed and wheeled around, and I could not hear distinctly what was said, until he asked if Aristobulus should still live. Menahem, for so the demoniac was called, replied, as I shrieked with terror and rushed through the crevice, and never stopped until I heard the rippling water at my feet, then I sat down and trembled.—Awhile after Mazrah returned, he did not come down the winding path, but from some avenue not far off. He cheered me, and we went back to my dwelling. As we glided along, he said; 'tell no one what you saw; I have not effected all I wished, nor got you to do one half for what I brought you: the terror your screams excited may produce all that I desired to effect in other ways.' He led me to my home, bade me be secret and that he would soon return—I longed to come to you."

At the latter part of this recital Mariamne's eyes had become fixed, every muscle seemed

stiffened, and she was with her right hand unconsciously twisting the silk covering of her cushioned seat. A thrilling low toned cry of agony burst from her trembling lips, and she sat, as if horror had seized her in his convulsive grasp. Tezellah was greatly alarmed and sprinkled some water on her face, and even gently shook her by the arm. Mariamne recovered sufficient strength and composure to say;

"Leave me now to sleep, your tale is very dreadful, but I think you may have been deceived."

Tezellah obeyed her mandate, and left poor Mariamne to endure all the agony of deeply suspecting, that her husband was really guilty of her brother's blood. Hope taught her to see with instinctive rapidity, that the circumstance did not prove it, but convicted Herod of jealousy, superstition, and fear of her injured race. Her peace of soul had long been destroyed: the tale she had just heard only added to her misery, by heightening all her suspicions, and giving reality to her dreadful forebodings, and for a

time she rapidly compared them. Many occurrences, and these facts, with what she had heard, and what she knew, had been the opinion of the people, and the dying words of Zillah, made an impression, on her mind, so closely approaching to conviction, that she could not conceal from herself the weight of evidence against the king. When she saw her children, and their father's features were recalled, she almost looked on them with disgust, then turned and caressed them, as if she had been unjust. All these circumstances excited suspicions of her own and her children's safety, and she determined to exert her power to learn from Sohemus all he knew.

Alexandra had done little more than lament, complain, and upbraid, since their arrival, and thus added to her daughter's perplexity. Mariamne summoned Tezellah, directed her to keep the tale she had heard secret, even from Dermah, and on the next day at the same hour to return and finish her narrative.

This last information did much towards reviving the spirit of the queen, which accumu-

lated grief had naturally depressed, and prevented from acting with that vigour of which she was capable.

Tezellah continued her narrative on the seventh hour of the ensuing day, when the inmates of the Palace were reposing.

" Peace be to my beloved mistress, my strange adventure seems to affect my queen more than I thought it would. But why should she be kept in ignorance of what most concerns her? The place where I dwelt was retired and far removed from the habitations of men, and until Mazrah came again we only heard that the nation was bewailing Aristobulus unexpected death. He wept and upbraided himself and darkly inferred, that he might have saved him; and once while lamenting said; 'I considered more than was wise what my princess would feel if she were told the danger.' Oftentimes he would sit near the sea and lament, though he tried to hide, like his sect, what he felt. When within our house he was always serene, excepting the first time he told us the dreadful story, but I suspected that all was not right, and watched him

when alone and saw how nature strove against his precepts. Many times I found him in company with the demoniac Menahem, over whom he possessed complete controul.

"Before the years of my servitude were completed, my mistress happiness was mingled with the leaven of jealousy; I was innocent, and, taking from her hand the price of my labour, departed. I joined a caravan going to Parthia, but falling sick on the way, I was left at a lonely village where it was long before I was restored. I wandered past Gennesereth, and was hired as a nurse to a Syrian captain's child and followed him to Samosata. After the capture of the city, he escaped with us to a wretched village in the mountains, where he was joined by many more, and with them harassed the Roman outposts. At last he was hunted to his strong hold, and died fighting over his infant. The village was burned, the men destroyed, and I was brought a captive here."

Mariamne questioned her on many parts of her narrative but gained no farther information. Day succeeded day, and yet no intelligence of Herod

reached them, and nothing occurred to break the dull monotony of that dreary life. Alexandra did little more than cry and vent her anger against her daughter and the king. Dermah was more than usually downcast, for her husband was not allowed to enter the fortress, but compelled to return to Palestine. Mariamne passed her hours in educating her children, and in re-invigorating her mind, which she felt had been weakened by sickness and sorrow, and in arranging her thoughts and pondering on all that she had heard and seen, and devising plans for more decided conduct whenever she should have an opportunity of acting. She conversed much with Dermah, but always avoided speaking of her husband, from a fear of betraying the suspicions she harboured of him; the apprehension in which she lived, for the fate of her children and herself, led her to determine with Dermah, to try and learn what orders Sohemus had received concerning them.

It had always been the opinion of Sohemus that Cæsar would deprive Herod of his crown, and probably of his life; yet he was resolved to

wait a limited time without incurring even the risk of blame, and therefore respectfully but decidedly performed the duties imposed on him. He was too much of a courtier, not to be certain, that the king would rather be pleased than otherwise, at his acquiescing in every wish of the queen that did not interfere with the chief reason for which she was immured in that retired place. He therefore did all he could to obtain the liberation of those captive women whom Mariamne deemed unjustly seized. She perceiving his readiness to oblige her in these matters, made his conduct a reason for expressing her approbation, and bestowing on him distinguished marks of her bounty, and so prepared him to become an easier conquest: Dermah acted with her and they soon brought him to terms of intimacy, and discovered after a short time his opinion of Herod's affairs, and his belief, that if any evil happened to him the Asmonean race would be sought for as the rightful inheritors of the Jewish throne. This information being gained, the queen and Dermah soon constituted him, in appearance, their chief counsellor, and

having thus far won him, suffered him to revel in his pleasing delusion until every suspicion of their intention was lulled.

Mariamne and Dermah despised policy and duplicity, but in the present instance, the former deemed her life in jeopardy and her children exposed to danger, the latter, considered herself called on to assist her friend in this extremity, and did not think her husband in perfect security, and knew full well, that when a ruler falls the ruin crushes those too near; they both felt, that they were unprotected women imprisoned in a distant fortress and surrounded by men against whom they could not apply force, and so were justified in using the only means within their power.

The first favourable opportunity that occurred the queen addressed Sohemus.

"Has no intelligence yet reached you from Rhodes, of what transpired between the king and Cæsar?"

"The winds have been boisterous and foul, and perhaps the messengers were sent by sea as the country between us and Rhodes is unsettled,

and the scouts say, filled with bands of stragglers from the routed armies."

" This long delay Sohemus makes me more than usually apprehensive for Herod's safety. What is your opinion?"

" I should deceive you were I to say, that I have no apprehension of Cæsar's depriving Herod of some of his worldly goods for all the assistance he gave his rival."

" Sohemus, if any evil were to happen to Herod can you depend on the fidelity of the garrison either to assist him or protect us?"

" I should hope that there will be no necessity for exerting such influence."

" In case unfavourable information should reach us of his proceedings, would it not be wiser for us to return directly to Jerusalem?"

" Permit me" replied Sohemus, " to enquire of your majesty the foundation of that opinion."

Mariamne with earnestness answered;

" The utility to him would be of the greatest importance, for I should be ready to become the regent until he could escape and resume his power."

Sohemus was at a loss to reply when Dermah simply asked him ;

" If any serious disaster should befal the king, and we were not to return to Jerusalem, where would you advise us to seek an asylum ?"

Sohemus was more perplexed than before, and hesitatingly replied ;

" If such misfortune should happen, we must act according to circumstances."

Mariamne asked him with an air of surprise ;

" Have you no instructions in case such an event should occur ?"

Sohemus was confused ; on seeing his embarrassment Dermah lightly remarked ;

" So the queen has discovered your neglect and want of generalship, in not having decided on your means and place of retreat in case of defeat—I think Sohemus that you had better go and improve yourself in military tactics before you undergo another examination, or give some answer to the unwarlike women in your charge, and say by chance, to Tadmor in the wilderness, or to the Oasis of Thebes, and tell them that they are both close to us, and somewhat nearer Rome."

He did not like their raillery, and exhibited to their keen penetration, that he had some secret orders, which he did not like to tell them. Mariamne added one more question as she kept her unchanging eye fixed on his, while Dermah watched his countenance unperceived by him;

"If Herod were not to return, how long should we remain in this dismal fortress?"

He was now deeply confused, and was at a loss for a reply: she did not think it prudent to excite his suspicions by too pointed a scrutiny, and with a kind voice remarked;

"It would be better Sohemus for us all, that you ascertained this point.—Would it not be wiser for you to go and write a dispatch to Herod, and send it either by sea or by some trusty courier?"

He availed himself of the dexterous means she had given him to escape, and left them professing his intention of immediately pursuing her suggestion.

As soon as they saw him cross the rampart, and were confident that he could not hear, they

communicated their suspicions to each other, and resolved at another favourable hour to follow up their investigation. Dermah proposed to try and communicate with Babarrah, through an Egyptian whom she had seen among the household. Alexandra had, from motives of curiosity and discontent, assailed the treasurer in a similar manner, and given him to understand that she was unmarried and wanted a protector. The ambitious treasurer did not hear this lament in vain, and thought how he best might win her. Only a few days passed, during which they had, with infinite address, flattered and won upon their keeper, so as to have brought him to that point, where few men can refuse their confidence to a respected and admired woman.

If the operations of the human mind were closely watched by us, we should quickly ascertain, that usually, many influences possessing various degrees of power, combine to produce a decided opinion, or action. Thus it was with Sohemus; he was much inclined to think, that Herod would be deprived of his power, and probably put to death, therefore the chance of his

becoming acquainted with any transgression of his orders was not great; he believed that if this occurrence did ensue, the queen would remain at least regent of the kingdom, and be able to reward and advance him; he felt his vanity gratified at the confidence of Mariamne, and highly delighted at the sweetness of her manner towards him, and at the distinguished marks of her approbation, sometimes not privately bestowed. Dermah's mode of consulting him gratified his self-estimation, as she was acknowledged to be a highly gifted woman; all this operated like sounds of syrens on his soul, and lulled his observation and reflection, as if he were a reveller on enchanted ground. When the two allies agreed that he was in a fit state for them to proceed, they, in casual conversation, thus pursued their end.

"Is your courier yet returned, Sohemus?"

"Blessed of your people, he has scarce had time to get there," was the reply.

"My anxiety to hear, has outstripped my reflection, or I should have remembered, that it was farther from this dismal strong hold to

Rhodes, than it is from the city of peace to Bethlehem."

Dermah agreed with Mariamne by saying;

"My expectation too prompted me to enquire for I dislike to live, not knowing to-day where I shall go, or what I shall do on the morrow."

Mariamne ceased for a moment to ply the threads, and asked with some concern;

"Sohemus, did you bid your courier make the enquiry of some faithful friend, who might be acquainted with the king's intentions, if any evil had happened to him?"

He replied with some affectation of surprise;

"The thought never entered my mind."

She looked at him with unfeigned melancholy while a sigh of true sorrow heaved her bosom, and said;

"Ah, I hoped that you had more concern for those committed to your charge, but you have little indeed: I should have had more thought for the dog that looked to me for protection."

This natural appeal was more than he could

bear in his present state of feeling, and he rejoined with some warmth as the blood flushed his cheek;

"Most respected and adored queen, think not that Sohemus has so little concern for you and yours."

Dermah quietly remarked;

"Then you have some plan by which we are to be regulated, in case of Herod's defeat at Rhodes."

He rose to depart, saying as he did obeisance to Mariamne;

"Forgive my unwillingness to communicate my orders; they were entrusted to my secresy, and should not be repeated."

Mariamne looked sorrowfully at him and replied;

"*But be obeyed with firmness and secresy.*"

The blood first rose to his face, then he was evidently confused, and stammered;

"That is generally the best way; but mine I hope will be rescinded."

Mariamne looked steadily at him and as a tear stole down her cheek asked;

" If your orders are not rescinded, would you obey them ?"

He could not endure that look, and in a voice that indicated how much his heart was touched, exclaimed ;

" No, no, a thousand Herods and a thousand Cæsars should not compel me, no, no—"

Mariamne, whose face was deadly pale, and whose lips trembled, in accents that no true man can bear, said ;

" Then you would not murder a poor defenceless woman ?"

She covered her face with her hands and wept. Sohemus wept too, and answered ;

" You have guessed the dreadful truth—such were my horrid orders—I promised to obey them, believing that you were not what I have found you ; now may I perish, may kingdoms rise or fall, I will not harm you ; nay protect you as long as life remains."

She held to him her trembling hand as she said ;

" Let this be the token of a covenant between us,—I will not escape, nor raise my people, which

I could do, and you will not obey the horrid orders of my husband."

He pressed it respectfully but fervently to his lips, and thus ratified their covenant.

After he had left them, she simply said to Dermah;

"He has more kindness than I thought he had."

Her friend felt that natural feeling had won a quicker passage to his heart, than they could have discovered to his head with all the powers of their necessary policy. Dermah endeavoured to allay the sorrow and indignation, this discovery of her husband's determination, that she should not survive him, had produced. She urged the necessity of secresy and prudence, not only for her own sake, but for the future welfare of her children. This latter consideration weighed deeply, and did more, than all the reasoning of her faithful friend could effect. She wept and vented, as the tears gushed from her eyes, her indignant feelings against the selfish, fierce, and cruel man to whom she had united herself. Dermah brought her children to her, and said;

" My queen, my friend, for their sakes moderate your just indignation and sorrow. Be assured, that in this spacious and dismal place, there are ear-holes, where spies and enemies are placed, to tell every expression that may serve to sanction the ends they have in view."

Mariamne, though she clasped her children, was still too indignant not to express her angry thoughts, and answered ;

" Self-preservation is the first law of nature— I will raise the war cry of Maccabeus among my people, free Israel from oppression, and preserve my life and the lives of my little ones."

She pressed them still closer to her, and caressed them, as if she felt prepared to defend them to the uttermost extremity. Dermah knelt by her side, and fervently implored her to subdue her anger, lest the evil they dreaded should overtake them. Mariamne's bosom heaved, and she replied, with the deepest emphasis ;

" To God that we were all either lost amid the oblivion of the dead, or that our souls were in the pleasant places of Paradise ; even if the soul was doomed to endure the insensibility of

the body, it would be preferable to a life of alarm and misery: but I will say no more."

She wept in silence over her children, and the tears of her friend fell too. Weeks of silent sorrow ensued preying upon her spirits, like the worm on the root of the fading lily.

CHAPTER XXIII.

A SUDDEN tumultuous noise in the courts of the citadel attracted the attention of Mariamne, as she sat with Dermah watching day exchanged for the sable hues of night. They looked from a projecting angle of the terrace, and saw the soldiers hurrying for their arms, and heard their officers loudly calling them to form near the portals: at the same time the tramp of horses and the ringing of armour caught their attentive ears, and presently Herod and his retinue were seen riding up the steep ascent and through the dimly lighted portals. Mariamne started with surprise, but in a moment recovered herself, clasped her extended hands and bent her head as she offered a short and silent prayer. She ought to have met him in the entrance court,

surrounded by her household, but she remained in her apartment waiting his arrival. He quickly dismounted, hastened through the passages and ascents, and with joyous steps approached the folding curtains that separated her room from the ante-halls. Her heart did not beat, nor did her lip quiver at the sound of his approaching steps, for since the time of her discovering his horrid intentions, she had wrought up her courage to support her feelings of detestation, which were greatly increased by her suspicions of his being the deliberate murderer of her brother. He ran to embrace her: she shielded herself from him, by extending her arm covered with her mantle. He started, and in a voice of anger and with a look of great surprise, said;

"Mariamne, my beloved Mariamne, I have hastened to you as fast as sails and rowers could waft me, to tell my much-loved wife, that Cæsar has added to our glory and our kingdom.—You look at me as if I had been guilty of some crime in obtaining more of Palestine for our kingdom. No joy at these tidings—No embrace."

She replied, in a calm and dignified manner

" None.—The prisoner is not wont to love and embrace his unjust, his cruel jailor."

Herod feigned surprise, and said;

" What means this, Mariamne? I am no cruel jailor, but your adoring husband."

He approached her, but she repulsed him, rejoining;

" Keep farther from me: I reject the adoration offered in a prison."

In a more indignant tone, she added;

" How dares a mere warrior, whose descent scarce reaches beyond his father's memory, to imprison an Asmonean Princess?"

The cheek of the king crimsoned with anger, and he rejoined;

" This the reception of the wife of my bosom?"

She quickly said, in a tone of sorrow and indignation;

" It is the reception of the imprisoned grandchild of Hyrcanus, whom Herod the Ascalonite slew, and then hastened away to secure his kingdom."

The king, from the effects of surprise and rage, could hardly articulate;

" He was a vile hypocrite and traitor, and died a traitor's death."

With increasing indignation, she replied;

" Fierce Ascalonite, think not to scare an Asmonean by your terror-importing name, or with your voice and looks—It's false: you slew him because you feared and suspected, like the viper, the hand that cherished you; and sent your injured wife, to lament his death, as a prisoner to this vile fortress. Leave me, for I hate you."

She raised her arm between him and her sight and turned her head away uttering a sound of indignation and disgust.

Herod raged, spoke incoherent words, and used some threats which Mariamne hearing exclaimed;

" You may threaten a poor imprisoned woman, and order an old gray haired friend to be put to death—but leave me my liberty and I will quickly shew you, that the lion of Judah still can roar, and our warlike tribes will yet defend an Asmonean against the Ascalonite, who would threaten her for being indignant at imprisonment."

His wonder was increased at these bold but injudicious words, and he replied as he looked at her;

"It seems that I had some cause for fear, and that 'twere well you were left in this secluded strong hold: I intended it as a place of refuge for you, but it proves to have been a safeguard to me."

Still she answered him;

"You have not been to Greece without returning with some of their boasted knowledge—You have gained a little from the sophists there. It needed not more sophistry to condemn Hyrcanus, than you have used to criminate your imprisoned wife—There is a court below, and this place is secluded—you will find an executioner among your train—poor Mariamne, to whom you made so many fair and loving promises, is ready to shed her blood and see her little ones dashed against the stones—We will go and join Hyrcanus and my—"

She looked at him while she paused; his heart sunk within him; then added;

"*My brother.*"

Herod suppressed the shock he felt and approaching her said in a tone of the deepest sorrow;

"Then let us go together—without thy love I would not live: kingdoms, and glory would be to me beggary without it—Here's my sword; slay me and with my dying eyes let me vow eternal love for Mariamne."

She was neither dismayed at his shining blade, nor deceived by his words, but sternly answered;

"I wish not to follow your example and imbrue my hands in blood—Alas, alas, I am the only scion of my race, or I would, though thou art my husband, know the methods by which poor Hyrcanus met his end—Herod, there is but one more of the dreaded race remaining—here she is, why not end your fears by slaying her?"

She knelt and offered her bosom to his sword, and with imploring accents besought him to kill her. At that moment Babarrah entered, and in a voice that made even the monarch start, exclaimed;

"The Parthian and wilder tribes are within a march of the fortress; your keenest sword will

be wanted—I offer no excuse for thus abruptly warning you, for it was my duty."

Herod gazed on him, and left the room, calling out;

"To arms, to arms, close the gates, mount scouts, prepare your engines."

Then returning to Mariamne said in a softer tone;

"Come my own loved wife, you shall not be a prisoner longer, for I must have you and the little ones set out for Jerusalem before midnight—You have been unkind and thought I sent you here to cage you—no, no, it was to preserve you, for I cannot live without you."

He would have embraced her, but she inclined her head and answered;

"The orders of my lord the king shall be obeyed, and we shall all be ready."

With a conciliatory voice and manner he again addressed her asking;

"Is there any captain you would prefer to guard you to Jerusalem?"

She immediately requested Babarrah, Reuben, and Jonathan.

The king sent orders to them directly to prepare. During the third watch the queen and all her retinue left the fortress and proceeded on their journey. It was thought more prudent to keep near the coast, until they arrived at Accho, where they rested for several days, and heard from Doris: after they were refreshed they recommenced their journey and reached Jerusalem in safety.

CHAPTER XXIV.

HEROD repulsed the attack on the fortress, then followed Mariamne to the capital. Amidst all his crimes and toils his love for her was unabated, and induced him to make great exertions towards subduing the anger and mortification which her undisguised dislike had engendered. At one time anger and love racked him and strove in his mind for the mastery, making him one hour resolve to punish her contumely, the next endeavour to obtain her affections by gentleness and concessions. While in this state he was summoned to Egypt by the death of Antony and his paramour.

Cypros and Salome had returned to Jerusalem, the former sorrowful and waning to the tomb, the latter meditating new schemes against

the queen, and delighting in the alienation which she saw taking place between her and her brother.

During the absence of Herod, Mariamne retired to a house belonging to the king, near the spot where he afterwards erected a splendid palace, for the sake of avoiding Salome, and pursuing that line of conduct which would prevent her husband from supposing, that she desired to render herself popular at Jerusalem.

The conduct of the queen towards Herod being known in the Palace soon became a topic of conversation, and reached the ears of Mazrah. His feelings were deeply interested and after a sojourn in the capital of some days, he reached the spot where Mariamne was. Babarrah commanded the guard of honour in attendance on her, and was soon accosted by the Essene when riding alone, and induced by him to appoint a time for meeting him in private. Dermah when she heard of the proposal entertained no suspicions of the good intentions of Mazrah, but she expressed an earnest wish, that their meeting should take place at Jerusalem, and that he

should not be seen near any place where the queen was. Babarrah perceived the wisdom of her advice and determined to desire him to leave the spot as quickly as possible and not return. On the following afternoon Mazrah met him in a defile close to the garden, and was in earnest conversation, when Tezellah appeared requesting Babarrah to return, as the soldiers and the attendants of Ananeel, who had just come on a visit of ceremony to the queen, were disputing with loud and threatening words: he turned to go and saw Salome, with two attendants close to him, who directly began to urge the same request; on seeing another with him she repeated the request to the apparent stranger. Mazrah could not avoid being seen, and therefore directly acceded to it. She made no observation, but her heart beat with pleasure at the discovery. Babarrah and Mazrah did not know how long she had been so close to them, but both expressed, by an exchange of looks, that they were suspicious and perplexed: the latter learnt enough from Babarrah to make him leave the place as soon as the tumult had subsided.

Salome and Ananeel had come on the pretext of a visit of ceremony, but in reality to watch what was going on in the household of the queen. After the usual salutations and customs, Salome inquired, "if Mazrah had been long about the household," and remarked, "that although she had not seen him more than three or four times in some years, it was often for one of his sect." Mariamne answered her with calmness; but a little surprise was perceptible on her countenance, which did not escape the notice of her enemies. After a few mutual and ceremonious inquiries, they returned to the capital, satisfied with the success of their journey.

Babarrah consulted with his wife on the aspect of their affairs, and on the probable violence of Herod, if the queen should persist in her present line of conduct; their opinions on the whole accorded, and Babarrah determined to propose an interview with the queen, attended by his wife.

Mariamne respected them both, and felt for them the attachment that a kindred soul must

for friends on whose fidelity, counsel, and courage, she could rely.

They met in a small retired room, at night. Mariamne was full of apprehension, yet collected and prepared to hear any proposition with patience. Soon after they were seated, and certain of being secluded, Babarrah thus simply addressed her;

"When my salute of 'peace be with you' has passed my lips, it is no empty sound, but an intense prayer of one who is ready to hazard his life for his queen, and who with his wife are her truest friends. You are the last representative of a noble race, in whom is concentrated many virtues, and who should live to perpetuate them. Princess of Israel, blanch not at the tale that I must tell you, but let it nerve your soul, and make it fit to act with vigour and decision. It is a nervous matter for a dependant to speak to a queen of her husband. I know not much of your laws respecting marriage, but conclude, that crimes are sufficient to sever the contract. Your erring kinsman Antigonus was scourged and slain: he deserved perpetual banishment at

least: he was slain by Antony; but at whose suggestion?—Your husband's. Mariamne, I warned you to nerve your soul; if you will hear more, I will continue; if not, I will close my lips, and fly this treacherous land."

Mariamne, in a low and hollow voice, said;

"Speak on, though it wracks my heart and almost maddens my half-distracted soul, speak on—I say, speak on."

"Alexandra, your mother, was imprisoned, and if the ruffian Sabbion had earned the price of blood, it was no more than he agreed for with your husband. You cannot bear the trial, but it must be, or we are lost. For the sake of your little ones, for the lives of your friends, again, I say, nerve yourself, and be a daughter of the Maccabees."

Mariamne gasped, and repeated her former orders.

"I will go on, the shock had better come at once, though I am loath to deal the blow. Herod is superstitious, and took me to the cavern at Engedi. Tezellah told you enough of the tale to shew the temper of his mind at that event-

ful time. He caused thy brother to be murdered."

Mariamne grasped his arm, and looking on his face, said, in a stifling voice;

" Swear that your words are true."

Babarrah knelt, bent his head to the earth, and raised his clasped hands to heaven, and said;

" By the Unutterable Name, my words are true."

She drew deep inspirations, then, as if her spirit had resumed its power, said, with firmness;

" Monster of hell, I renounce him, and will no more call him husband.—Tell on, you cannot hurt me now; despair can laugh at fear—tell on, I say—I order you."

She tried to laugh, but it was a horrid heart-rending sound she uttered. Babarrah, much moved, obeyed her mandate;

" Hyrcanus was falsely toiled by Herod's order, and cut off to pacify his fears."

Mariamne exclaimed;

" I told him so—I told him so."

At these words Babarrah and Dermah were

surprised ; the latter looked alarmed, which Mariamne perceiving, added ;

" You came in when I besought him to slay me ; 'twas then I told him so ; and from that hour have banished him from my embrace."

Babarrah, after a pause, continued ;

" You are in jeopardy, and your children too. Herod still prefers you to all other human things, and would now sacrifice a hecatomb of victims to appease you ; but you are the last of the dreaded race,—you are suspected by him."

" Of what?" demanded Mariamne.

" Of aspiring to separate dominion, and of—forgive me—being *more partial* to another ; no more."

She bent her head on Dermah's bosom to hide her burning and indignant blushes. He went on thus ;

" If you pursue the same course that you have done of late, he will slay you, and then your children. We are prepared to fly where no Herod, nor even Cæsar, will dare to follow. We offer you to fly with us, and I will ensure your children's safety and your own."

Mariamne was surprised, hesitated, then replied;

"You have told me a dreadful tale, and confirmed the doubts that haunted me. Let him slay me, the tomb is my only resting-place—the only refuge for a broken heart. I do fear for my babes, and would send them with my much-loved Dermah. No, it cannot be. Were I to fly, he would pursue farther than the track young Ammon opened; then too he might suspect me; and no Asmonean shall be suspected for flying from death in its most hideous form—by a husband's hand. My poor babes I would trust with you, but them he will not injure. Fly to your desert homes, and we shall meet again; for I know that our Redeemer, our Avenger, liveth; and that He the last shall stand above the dust—shall triumph over death. Go, my Dermah, go with your faithful husband, and sometimes think of poor Mariamne, who will, from this hour, sit silent and get into darkness, and no more be called the queen of kingdoms. Farewell, a long farewell."

She clasped Dermah to her bosom, but did

not weep, though both her and Babarrah's tears gushed from their eyes. At length Dermah said;

"I will not leave you, and I know my husband will not: I too have a son, who might be made a sin-offering for his parents, were we to be suspected. Woe has begirt us like a hunter's snare, and we cannot escape, unless we break the toil and fly to the desert; peace will await us there. My queen, my friend, fly with us and leave the fierce Ascalonite; he will be tamer when all his fears are removed. Our son waits but for a signal to follow us."

Mariamne sorrowfully rejoined;

"Ah Dermah, you know not the full import of your words,—peace await me in your deserts! No, never more will peace spread her dove-like wings above me. Memory will follow me as long as my soul has a local habitation and a name. 'Tis said, that in the grave there is no remembrance:—of misery it must be; for there the wicked cease from troubling, and the weary be at rest. You are in danger; fly, I implore you to fly, and leave me to my fate."

Babarrah looked upon her, and said, in a broken voice;

"Never: while a twilight gleam of hope remains,—never."

The proud Arab could not bear that his weakness should be seen, and went sorrowfully away, leaving Dermah with the afflicted Mariamne, who remained awake until the morning sun had dawned.

On Salome's arrival at Jerusalem, to her great surprise, she saw the king in the Palace much displeased at not finding Mariamne there. The artful implacable woman availed herself of Herod's irritated state of mind, and after embracing him, said;

"Ananeel and I have just returned from the queen; who might as well have been here to receive her husband my lord the king."

He answered;

"There was a time when she would not have insulted me in so open and marked a manner. Perhaps she has society in her retreat far preferable to mine."

The tone of chagrin in which the monarch

pronounced the latter portion of this speech, induced Salome to say;

"Our reception was so inhospitable, that we gladly returned to Jerusalem. There is with her that subtle Arab, in whose company the good Aulenus was slain, and the Essene Mazrah, who so captivated Mariamne in the glen where those wretched fanatics have their hiding-place."

Herod looked much discomposed, and replied;

"I know my haughty unkind wife to be true to me; but it is passing strange that this Essene should be so often where she is."

Salome followed up her success, and added;

"It is curious, and so contrary to the custom of his sect. He was at Modin, when that old traitor Hyrcanus was buried."

"At Modin," repeated the king to himself, with great emphasis.

Salome directly continued;

"And he was at Samaria too, when Mariamne visited poor Doris. Send for her, to shame this proud Asmonean, who is so fond of the company of this beautiful Essene; he is said to be

very beautiful. He was in deep consultation with Babarrah when I saw him."

The king looked more disturbed, and asked ;

" What were they consulting about? Did you hear if aught of consequence had transpired?"

" Nothing that I have heard. I only heard the Essene ask the Arab, ' when you would return.' I think I saw this Mazrah near the Palace when I entered."

Herod broke off the discourse, and soon afterwards called a sattellite, and asked him if he knew the person of Mazrah, and received confirmation of Salome's report. He ordered him to be immediately seized, and put into the dungeon of the tower of Antonia.

The sattellite left the monarch, and unfortunately found Mazrah loitering near the gardens, and immediately conveyed him to the dungeon.

CHAPTER XXV.

The certainty of Herod's guilt, and the dread, in which Mariamne lived, of being the cause of irremediable misfortune to her friends, wrought her up to the hopelessness of despair. Sleep fled from her eyes, and she looked as if the corroding worm of death was preying on her heart. Cypros perceived the state in which she was, and hinted to Herod her danger; all her attempts to induce him to pursue towards her, and those whom she numbered among her friends, a more confidential manner, were frustrated by the secret insinuations of Salome, who was watching her victim mouldering piecemeal to the grave. Cypros was deeply affected at Herod's conduct, and deprecated his headlong actions; for one day she saw him scatter wealth among his

minions, order palaces, towers, and public buildings to be erected; on the next exact revenue from his oppressed provinces, and drain his people of the produce of their industry. She had long been waning to the tomb, and her gray hairs were being brought to it with sorrow by the conduct of her son. She coveted the society of Mariamne, and soon convinced her of the sincerity of her friendship. Alexandra was more with her daughter than usual, and seeing her the prey of hopeless misery, felt much more than might have been expected from a character so little susceptible of any impressions.

Herod at that time saw but little of his family, for he was preparing to escort Cæsar, with great magnificence, from the Egyptian confines of Judæa to Antioch. Before he left Jerusalem for the purpose, he ordered Mazrah to be privately strangled. Tezellah heard of the execution of the horrid mandate, and with bitter grief related it to Mariamne. The shock added to her misery and dread, and she was sorry that she had not flown when Babarrah proposed the scheme to her; she did not attempt to conceal from herself

that Mazrah had been sacrificed to the fears and jealousy of the king. As she lay awake on her sleepless couch, and retraced the events of her life, and bewailed the murder and degradation of her race, her mind would sometimes wander, and picture scenes of happiness that might have awaited her if she had been the wife of Mazrah, and dwelt in the peaceful glen where she first had seen him. At that silent hour she did not conceal from herself, that there had been some latent feelings in her heart, which might have sprung forth in all the ardour of the noblest love, but which duty, circumstances, and grief, had ever kept almost unknown: now he was numbered with the dead, she dared to remember him, and regret that her lot had not been cast with him. As she was the cause of his death, many tears were shed by her in all the silent bitterness of sorrow. Some slight circumstances led her to believe, that the feelings of humanity had mastered the precepts of the Essene, and that he had loved her, though a queen and a wife. That knowledge did not render his death less painful to her; for as it was distant, respectful, and

unspoken, she could not help, as a woman, remembering it with kindness.

Old Cypros knew that her end was drawing near, and did all she could to reconcile her family, but in vain. It was nearly midnight when the inmates were summoned to minister to her in her dying hour. She summoned Herod, Mariamne and her family, and after bidding them farewell and blessing them desired to be left with Herod, to whom, while dying she thus spoke;

"My son, my son, if the voice of thy dying mother can penetrate thy soul listen. Like all the children of our first parents, I am but a sojourner and stranger here and now about to depart to the far country where they have taken refuge—Your fathers, where are they? gone whence they shall not return—and where thou shalt go—and where thou shalt call corruption thy father, the worm thy mother and thy sister—My son thou tremblest; see thy old weak mother does not fear; nor would'st thou, if thou would'st think of the measure of thy days; and discover how frail thou art."

She raised herself on the pillow, and when her breathing would permit her, spoke more firmly as she fixed her eyes, now possessing a more than human look, on Herod's.

" Awake thy slumbering conscience—bid memory rouse her from her glutted sleep—Ah! my mental sight grows clearer as death steals over my earthly frame. Glutted with blood—Herod I cite thee by the Unutterable Name to stay and hear my words. On whom should the Avenger of Blood have wreaked his vengeance when Antigonus was slain? Does the innocent blood of Joseph cry from the ground? When the waters shall yield up their dead whom will Aristobulus call his murderer?—Thou canst not go; the spirit that prompts my words chains thee there—Thy teeth may close, and the drops trickle from thy brow, but thou shalt not go. Who shed the blood of the priests and brought down the gray hairs of thy friend, the Lord's anointed, to the grave with blood? When the secrets of the dungeon shall be revealed—What will the pious Mazrah say, when asked who slew him? Thou canst not take thine eyes from mine, no more

than when the murdered Zillah looked upon thee —Trembling sinner, hast thou not heard, that bloody and deceitful men shall not live out half their days? Warrior, when thou wagest battle with death from that war is no discharge, save through the portals of the grave—from thence where wilt thou pass? To everlasting life, or to shame? Jehovah will bring every secret work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil—Which does thy conscience tell thee thou deservest?

"The shadow of death passeth before me, what is it that I see? Fearful and terrible things lost in its gloom, and I hear noises as of wailing women, as of women who will not be comforted—Herod, thy thoughts are thoughts of iniquity: wasting and destruction are in their paths—Weep, mourn, howl, clothe thyself in sackcloth, fast, and commit thy works unto the Lord and thy thoughts shall be established."

She raised her dying hand, still keeping her eyes fixed on the fascinated and trembling monarch, then with an effort she raised herself and continued;

" Lest He tread thee in his anger,
And trample thee in his indignation—
He who will ransom me from the power of the grave,
Who will redeem me from death,
Who will swallow up death in victory,
And wipe the tears from mine eyes."

As these last words passed her lips she sunk back and was numbered with the dead. Herod fell on the ground and all the furies of hell seemed torturing his soul with the burning recollections of his crimes from which he could not escape. His cries brought the mourners and minstrels, and the Palace was filled with lamentation for the dead.

The remains of Cypros were interred with honour. During the days of mourning Mariamne kept herself within the armon, and after the burial, on the plea of sickness, retired to the secluded place where she had resided while the king was absent.

CHAPTER XXVI.

The behaviour of Mariamne to Salome, for some time, had been marked with a degree of disgust which stung her to desperation, and made her redouble her efforts to bring her to destruction. She waited until Herod had left Jerusalem, then repeatedly sought the society of Azahzel, the king's cup bearer, and at length held unrestrained intercourse with him. Being a perfect mistress of deception, she wound her web around him, until he almost acted in every minute particular under her immediate orders: this was more readily effected as he had become passionately fond of her. His high situation gave him free access to her, and as the greater number of the attendants had gone either with the king or Mariamne their illicit meetings escaped detection—She availed herself of his weakest moments and thus won him to become her instrument.

"My love you cannot doubt; with you I

should be happy, if one bitter drop did not make me wish to dash the cup from my lips."

"What," replied Azahzel, "can I have left undone that so embitters my happiness since it affects yours?"

She caressed him and rejoined;

"You are perfect, it is another who has poured the bitter water of Marah on my soul—Ah! one who has let it fall on me drop by drop to increase my torture."

She put her head on his bosom and added;

"I want the comfort such a friend as you can give to my soul, for the evil is beyond my power to avoid."

Azahzel looked on the perfidious hypocrite and his heart beat with quicker pulse, and pressing her to him answered;

"How can I comfort such sorrow of heart? To try and pour a balm into your wounds to-day, would only lull the pain. Cannot the evil be removed?"

She shook her head and sighing deeply continued;

"No, no, the tormentor of my soul lords it

over me, spurns me, upbraids me with my birth, even ordered that I should not enter her armon."

Azahzel with surprise enquired;

"Who can you mean? Surely it is not our haughty queen."

She sorrowfully replied;

"The same, the very same, who is also unfaithful to my brother—I have no husband but you, and should be horror smitten at the thought —Ah this same proud unfeeling tormentor hates you, and will, I fear, soon induce my fond brother to drive you from the presence of the king."

"Salome, she has often treated me like some inferior being and I have long hated her; now I detest her with deep detestation, since she has persecuted the woman whom I love."

The hypocrite was rejoiced at her scheme working so readily and went on;

"Now Cypros is gone I shall have enemies on every side; the deep designing Dermah, the selfish Alexandra, and the Asmonean—The beasts of the field remove their enemies; the stubborn Roman does so; the Arab and Ethiopian circumvent and slay their foes; even the

Israelite is commanded to pursue and kill the man who slew his nearest relation of kindred blood—It seems strange, that having discovered a certain intention in another to destroy us we have not power to anticipate the deed."

Azahzel whose feelings of resentment were kindled, thoughtfully replied;

"That must be included, not only in the natural law of self-preservation, but in your command."

She again caressed him, and thus followed up her words;

"Few souls are as noble and liberal as my Azahzel's; it was his courage and magnanimity that first won my heart.—The enemy is too strong, too great, so we must bear not only our wrongs, but live in jeopardy, without resisting, and perhaps die for our patience."

Azahzel's spirit was excited by her words, and he replied in a lower, but more emphatic voice;

"An enemy too strong may be circumvented and ensnared, and so enable an oppressed and broken foe to escape destruction."

This was all she wanted from her dupe, and thus continued her hellish purpose.

" Ah my beloved, I would save you, for that would be ensuring my own safety, for without you, life would soon pass from me."

He fervently replied;

" I would not live without you—Salome how shall we save ourselves?"

The fiend hesitated, then answered;

" It would require courage and address—Oh —I will bear on to the last; for if you were to fail, all my hopes would be blasted, and both for ever lost."

With some affected indignation he rejoined;

" Doubt my address, but not my courage; how would you put them to the proof?"

She allowed her head to sink upon his bosom as she said;

" Ask me not, ask me no more, for if your life were the sacrifice, I should die."

He followed her into the recesses of the toils, and thus rejoined;

" We are consulting for our mutual safety, if you would not advise me how to preserve your precious life, tell me how I may ensure my own."

She looked on, and feigned melting into tears as she said;

"Oh Azahzel, talk not of your danger, or sleep will fly mine eyes, and misery attend my steps—I know your courage and address would lead you through the Egyptian labyrinth, but for my sake you shall not be exposed, no, we will die together."

She sunk upon his bosom as if she had swooned with grief. He revived her, and then said with some degree of fierceness on his countenance;

"You hate me or you would tell me how to save myself, and thus preserve my love."

She threw back her hair, gazed at him intently, and said in a subdued voice;

"Death in any shape were preferable to your thinking that I hate you—tell me that you do not, and I will collect my scattered thoughts and think with you, of how we may be saved."

The insensate man answered;

"Doubt not my love, or I will prove it, by first plunging my dagger to the heart of our enemy and then into my own."

With affected fear she said;

"That must not be, or I should have the furies haunt me for urging you to kill yourself—We must be cool, cautious, and secret.—Mariamne has been unfaithful to her husband, and therefore, by our law deserves death.—She would destroy us, so we may preserve ouselves, and only inflict the deserved punishment. To accuse her positively would not do—but Azahzel, were you to tell her husband, that she tried to bribe you. (She whispered to him, then in a more audible voice continued.) It would lead to farther examination, and then the truth would follow. It is, my Azahzel, but a most fair way to, as you have said, circumvent a stronger enemy and prevent our own destruction."

He replied without hesitation;

"Our enemies shall not go unscathed, your wishes shall be obeyed, and so while we inflict the just punishment of her crimes, we will defend ourselves.—Let our embrace be the seal of our compact."

They parted some hours after, determined to perfect their horrid resolution.

CHAPTER XXVII.

HEROD returned from escorting Cæsar, gratified with the manner in which he had been personally treated, and exulting in an encrease of territory. His first wish was to prove to his new ally and benefactor, the extent of the confidence he reposed in him.

The ill health of Mariamne would have induced her to remain in seclusion, but he summoned her to Jerusalem as soon as he reached the Palace. Her reception of him was not more flattering than before; he however disguised his feelings under the mask of joy, and after enumerating all the cities and provinces added to his territory, concluded by telling her, that he intended to send her eldest son to Rome immediately, to be educated under the eye of Cæsar. Few things

could have added to her wretchedness, this was one of them, and for which she was not prepared. On hearing the intention she looked at Herod, but could not articulate: he was alarmed and extended his arm to support her; she shrunk from his touch, and said in a hurried voice;

"Slay him, slay him, but for mercy's sake send him not to be brought up a heathen, an idolater, a stranger to the religion of his fathers."

Herod turned from her; and she sunk on a couch, he paced the room fiercely exclaiming;

"Woman, when will you cease to thwart me in all I do and say? Your idle superstition and prejudices would make you sacrifice me and a kingdom, rather than our son should be brought up in all the knowledge and accomplishments of the Roman court. Would you have him a disciple of the hypocrite Ananeel?"

He paused for a minute, then added with a look of suspicion and irony;

"Perhaps you would prefer some Essene—like that prowling traitor, Mazrah, for his instructor.—I have been bearded enough, for my

vigilance and justice, by the women of my family, and will endure it no longer.—Keep within your armons, nurse your children, and be pleasant when your husbands honour you with their company."

He would have continued, but she interrupted him by replying with feelings of indignation to his uncalled for attack.

"I should prefer being honoured with your absence—your violence and language are not suited to one born in the station in which Providence placed me. It might suit some Idumæan wife, as barbarous as the wild tribes of the desert, but not the daughter of the Princes of Israel. If I have power to retain my child, I will."

Herod smiled scornfully and answered;

"I thought as much, and so removed the boy, who is, by this time in a galley, and speeding his way to Rome."

Mariamne's spirit failed her on learning that her child had thus been torn away, and she clasped her hands and sobbing exclaimed;

"Barbarian, thus to trample on the tenderest

ties of nature—to steal away my little one, without one parting look, without one kiss—to send him amid the enemies of my people and my God."

Her affliction prevented her from saying more, but she knelt and bowed her head to the ground and prayed, that the sea might whelm him rather than he should be made an outcast from Israel. Herod stamped and bade her rise on pain of more displeasure. The noise attracted Dermah, who was in attendance, and who feigning a belief that she was summoned, entered the room. Herod, in a voice almost choaked with rage, commanded her to retire. The courageous woman fixed her eyes on him and said in an unchanged voice;

"I will not go.—I will not leave my queen and friend within the powerful grasp of a furious and incensed man, whose voice is fearful, and whose look is vengeance.—What, put your hand upon your sword,—you cannot frighten me, and you dare not, though a king, offer me violence.—I will assist the queen, and if you do not leave the room I will raise the Palace."

She approached the exhausted Mariamne, who had swooned away: seeing her lips pale and her eyes closed, she raised a cry, clapped her hands, and, in an instant, attendants came hurrying in, and the brutal monarch was compelled, from shame, to leave the place. He muttered vengeance as he went, and then vented his fury upon all he met. He sought Salome in the Palace where his mother had died. She was in the room where he received her last awful warning. The tempest of his passion had spent itself, and the recollections of that solemn scene were almost converted to realities. The bed on which she yielded up her breath, the carpet, on which he knelt, had been purified and replaced. Her words seemed to be repeated in his ears, and the thrilling whispers of conscience told him of all his crimes and cruelties, and the penalties attached to them: he dashed his hand against his brow, and for a time agony of soul threatened him with frenzy. He spurned Salome, beat his bosom, repeated his mother's dying words, and vowed a thousand vows. Salome, who had watched him, approached with gentle tread and

the blandest words, and tears, when she perceived him more calm, and induced him to take refreshment and rest, and return to his palace.

He did not see Mariamne, but occupied himself for several successive weeks in visiting the cities added to his kingdom, in raising his revenues, and planning vast and various improvements. Sometimes the recollection of Mariamne, and the conduct of Dermah crossed his mind, and recalled those feelings of resentment, which he thought he was desirous of suppressing. After he had terminated his progress through his new dominions, he returned to Jerusalem.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

SALOME, during the absence of her brother, had matured her scheme with Azahzel, and only waited for an opportunity to execute it: the dissensions between the king and her victim left her in no doubt of one soon occurring.

Dermah and Babarrah lived in great anxiety, not only on account of Mariamne, but from apprehensions for their own safety, which were greatly increased since Dermah interfered between Herod and his queen.

Mariamne's health declined, and she felt reckless of all worldly things excepting her children and friends. The hatred produced by the conviction of Herod's guilt, had become a horror of his name; her exalted piety led to a desire, that her children should be taken far away, and

rather bred up in obscurity than be led into the paths of indifference for their religion, and for the feelings of their fellow men. She sometimes thought, that if Mazrah had been alive, she would have entrusted him with them, since the secrecy of his sect and his friends might have been relied on. The tribes among which Babarrah would take them, were not yet converted from their heathenism, and it was opposed to her principles to send them where, if he should die, they might imbibe the idolatrous opinions of those with whom they dwelt. While reflecting on these perplexing and momentous subjects, the intelligence reached her of Herod's intention to return immediately.

He hoped, and expected, to find her reconciled to the absence of their son, and, after his decided and violent conduct, more submissive to his will. He did not know of her conviction of his atrocities, and did not remark, that as his power and wealth increased, and gratified his ambition, his imperious temper became more overbearing, and his system of policy, to preserve his acquisitions, more sanguinary and subtle.

Mariamne was at the secluded dwelling near Jerusalem, when a summons arrived requesting her to return to the Palace. She left this dwelling very early on the ensuing morning and soon reached Jerusalem. Her dread of meeting Herod had increased, it did not arise from fear, she was reckless and past that feeling, but from a horror of beholding the man who had dyed his hands in the blood of her kindred. On her arrival she retired to the armon, and desired to be left to take some repose; she did not sleep, but ruminated on the dreadful deeds which had been perpetrated, and on the miseries that might await her and her children. At the usual hour for the mid-day rest, Herod sent for her to attend him. She arose and went: her face was wan and thin, her hair unbound, and her dark eyes bearing the expression of deep and settled despair. Herod was reposing on his couch, and as she entered held out his arms for her to meet his embrace. She thrilled and turned away, as if disgust was too powerful to be overcome. Though he felt his choler rising, he was unwilling to continue his quarrel, and again attempted

to induce her to come to him. She did not speak but looked at him with loathing and contempt. He sprung from the couch, and angrily exclaimed;

"Is this the return you make me for my love? Is this the reception of my queen after recovering the kingdom of Israel? Is this the effect of the parting lesson I gave you?"

She felt no fear, but her noble spirit rising in her bosom; and he saw it by the altering expression of her eyes. After looking on him she replied;

"Your lesson was one by which I could have learnt to hate you, if no other causes had existed to justify my abhorrence. Have you recovered the kingdom to pacify the spirits of the injured Asmoneans? You expect me to return your love. Base Ascalonite, did you prove your boasted love by inducing the assassin Antony to scourge and kill Antigonus? Well may you tremble— Did you prove this vaunted love by drowning my only brother? Did you ratify your proofs by murdering Hyrcanus?"

He drew his dagger and sprung towards her.

She did not move but bared her bosom and exclaimed;

"Exterminate the hated race that fostered you—Think not to scare me by your dagger or your furious looks, my spirit is past all fear—Again I ask you—If you proved your love by commanding the murdered Joseph to stab me if your fellow assassin Antony condemned you for your crimes? Where is Mazrah who saw you murder my poor ill-fated brother?—Unhand me, monster, your touch is a serpent's fang to my very soul—stab me if you will—but touch me not—Unhand me, I will meet the keen edge of your steel—but in mercy let me not feel your accursed hand."

The door opened and Azahzel, instructed by Salome, entered in haste, and falling prostrate said;

"Safety to my lord the king, I came thinking that some violence had been offered to you, and to disclose a horrid plot against the king."

Herod had sheathed his dagger and released Mariamne from his grasp, when the cup bearer so abruptly entered: his fears were evidently ex-

cited by this intelligence and he loudly demanded;

"Slave by your life tell all you know—Who are these foul conspirators? where are they? what is their intention?"

Azahzel had risen from his prostrate position and was kneeling opposite the king, Mariamne, pale and almost exhausted, stood not far off. He did not reply, but looked on the queen and again bent his head. Herod in a voice of anger and alarm asked;

"What means this manner and this silence? Do you wish the queen to leave the apartment? speak, slave I command you."

The wretch looked at Herod and replied;

"My conscience bids me not to conceal the deed—Your queen now standing there has bribed me to give you *a poisoned cup*."

Mariamne started, then quickly advanced to the side of Herod, who had clutched his dagger, and whose teeth were closed, and in a firm voice exclaimed;

"Thou art a false and suborned traitor seeking to murder me. Herod that wretch has accused

me falsely—I will have the Sanhedrin convened, I will have my enemies brought forward and my fame established before my people—With my God my conscience tells me that I am free from crime—and by His Unnutterable Name I swear it."

Herod turned to her and said;

"No wonder that you loathed the husband whom you were about to murder—Azahzel can have no motive for his fidelity but his sense of duty, and I do believe him, or you would not have despised me, and looked like one, bent on some dark deed."

Her eyes had been fixed on his, and she again with unshaken firmness replied;

"Believe the wretch or not as you please; by the great Jehovah you have wronged me—All he says is false. If it is your wish to see me follow my murdered race, I am ready to go."

She remained as if intensely desiring death. The blood rushed into Herod's face and he fiercely exclaimed;

"The Sanhedrin shall be convened and you

shall have your wish, in the mean time, away to your armon."

He then called for the captain of his guard and ordered him on pain of death to keep the queen within her rooms. Mariamne spoke no more but followed the officer. Before she was out of hearing he ordered others, who had assembled, to seize the private chamberlain of the queen and carry him to the torturers. Mariamne shrieked and fainted when the horrid sounds reached her, and she was borne away. Dermah hastened to her, while Babarrah went out among the Asmonean guard to observe how they received the intelligence of the seizure of their queen.

Herod descended himself to the dungeon where the faithful chamberlain had been taken: he accused him of concealing his knowledge of the affair, and even of intending his death.

It was in vain the old and tried domestic protested his innocence; the fierce and cruel Herod ordered him to be extended on the rack. The cutting cords were wound round his thighs and arms, and the hot probes prepared. Still the good old man firmly denied his having any

knowledge of the transaction, and moreover declared his conviction, that the whole was fabricated to ensure the destruction of the queen, and that Salome was her bitterest enemy. At this affirmation the rage of Herod was still greater, he seized the levers, and wound the cords so tight, that the blood gushed out, and they were drawn tight against the bone. At the same time he commanded the tormentors to thrust the burning probes beneath his nails and within the sockets of his joints. He looked with demon-like joy at the wretched man suffering the direst agonies, and again demanded of him the truth. He again declared his firm conviction, that Salome and Azahzel had plotted the scheme. As he uttered amid his groans these words, a distant voice was heard, exclaiming;

"Let the traitor die the death, for he has falsely accused the sister of the king."

On turning towards the door, Salome was seen through the iron grate: she had followed Herod to the dungeon to feast her eyes on the victim writhing in tortures; for he was the chamberlain who had refused to admit her into the

armon of the queen. Even the savage tormentors were shocked, and closed the grate.

Still more horrid tortures were applied; and amid the excruciating agony, the dying wretch exclaimed;

"Her hatred for you is caused by some thing the kind Sohemus told her in the fortress."

Herod grinned with demoniac fierceness, and ordered the executioners to dispatch him, and left the dungeon. As soon as he reached the guard, he called the officers, and loudly declared;

"Sohemus, who has served me well, would never have made known to the queen my private orders, but where he had no right to be, therefore seize him, and directly slay him: remember, if he escapes, your lives are forfeited."

Sohemus was seized, and slain. Herod went raging to his apartment, like a glutted tiger to his lair. Salome followed him, and kneeling, besought him to listen to her, for she was his injured sister. He sternly said;

"Whence all this misery? I can hardly tell. Curses on you for not warning me before.—I

want no defence from you.—What more do you know of this foul proceeding?"

Salome, with affected grief, rejoined;

"Sohemus passed his days with Mariamne at the fortress: it is not surprising that one so beautiful should have inspired him with unpardonable love. I fear that love was not wholly rejected; but he is gone, and so now it matters not, for he can love no more."

Herod's lips quivered at this intelligence, and his vengeance was added to by the fires of jealousy. He only asked, in a hollow voice;

"What more?—What more?"

The fiend pretended to be much afflicted; and added, in a half complaining voice;

"Alas! You know I warned you from the first, that she did not love you; then I distinctly told you, that the vile Mazrah had attracted her wandering thoughts: now we find the weak Sohemus was a favourite too. Ah Herod, had my advice been followed, there would have been none of this misery on us all.—Alas! alas!"

The infatuated monster still continued to ask her for more information, and credulously trusted

to the accuracy of all her artful lies, until his soul was harrowed up to a state bordering on frenzy. He summoned Ananeel, and directed him to convene the Sanhedrin on the following morning, and ordered that they should assemble in the audience hall. During the greater part of the night, he occupied himself in arranging the order of the trial, and in preparing the accusation against his wife. He was roused from a short feverish slumber by his attendant, with the information, that the hour for their assembling was at hand.

During the night Dermah had brought the children to Mariamne, at her earnest request. She kissed them, prayed over them, and with the last tears she ever shed followed them to the outer door, where the rough centinel did obeisance; and, as the tear-drop moistened his eye, said;

"I will not stop the queen, if she will fly from this horrid place."

She thanked him, asked his name and tribe, and returned. When Dermah came back, Mariamne threw herself on her neck, blessed and

thanked her, then besought her to grant her one favour. The weeping Dermah bade her to command it. She instantly said;

"I command you to leave me and join your husband, and fly this hated, this polluted land. Dermah, when you are far away, and I am numbered with my murdered race, Oh sometimes think of me, who loved you with a sister's love, and looked upon your husband as my truest friend. We shall meet again, where no deadly malice can pursue us, and where no evil can assail us. Farewell, a long, a last farewell.—Ah! weep not so my friend. I cannot weep; the stillness of despair has chilled me. Go, Dermah; obey my last command; and carry with you my grateful remembrance to Babarrah."

Dermah clung to her, and replied;

"He bade me stay with you until he gave me a signal to fly;—he has friends and fleet horses to bear us far away. There must be retribution in another life; there must be some safe refuge for the wretched to repose in. I will not weakly bid you hope for life—it is not worth your keeping. The very remembrance of your miseries

would blast the blessings of all this world's prosperity. May we meet again hereafter, and, 'forgetful of our former woes,' dwell with the blessed, and those who loved us here, for ever."

They remained locked in each other's arms until Mariamne broke the silence.

"Of my babes I dare not speak, lest all my resolution fail me. May angels guard them, and may our God forget to visit on them their father's crimes. Tell them hereafter, that their mother was an injured woman, driven through a vale of misery to destruction. Dermah, one thing weighs heavy on my heart,—I have sent to see my mother, and she comes not. Ask her for her blessing on me, assure her of my innocence, beg her to forgive me for every fault and every act that fell short of my duty. And Dermah, if she could be persuaded to fly with you, it might save her from destruction, and Herod from more deeply imbruing his hands in blood.—My memory seems struggling to recal some last impressions. Ah, they come: It is now I see the completion of the greater portion of the dream I told you. Oh, it would harrow up my soul to

madness to see farther—what has passed I can think of—but Oh heavenly Father cover the future with the veil of night—Dermah come pray with me, and then I will try and sleep until my husband and his judges send for me to be condemned."

Dermah shuddered at the word, but the queen without emotion said;

"It will only be a mandate to waft me to regions of bliss and peace—My babes—what meant those forms in my dream?—I must try and sleep, lest more horrible forebodings should assail me."

She placed herself on her couch, whispered a silent prayer and, being exhausted, slept, while her friend watched over her.

The preparations for the trial occupied so long a time, that it was the eighth hour before the queen was summoned to appear before her judges.

Herod had been informed that crowds of adherents to Mariamne had entered the city and were bold in expressing their belief of her innocence; he dreaded more than all of them, the fearless Arab, and would have seized him if he had not

thought his doing so would be a signal for tumult: he ordered his brother Pheroras to keep close to him, and on the least disturbance to slay him. The Palace was lined with the Idumæan guards, mercenary troops occupied the adjoining streets, and the Galatians, given him by Cæsar, were stationed in the avenues and courts.

The High Priest Ananeel was seated on a chair of state, the priests, elders, and scribes occupied their accustomed places: Herod on his throne appeared as the accuser of his wife. Opposite to him were Alexandra, Salome, and witnesses.

Mariamne, supported by Dermah, entered the hall. She would not clothe herself in mourning garments, because she was innocent, and going to the house of joy in Paradise—her dress was white, her hair unbound fell on her neck beneath a veil. On reaching the place destined for her, she put her hand upon her bosom and inclined her head to the Sanhedrin. She then threw back her floating veil, as if indifferent to the scrutiny of those who thought her guilty. Her face was pale and woe-worn, her eyes did not

move, but her head turned gently as she surveyed the assembly, and, for a moment, were fixed on the savage monarch, who could not bear the melancholy majesty of her look. Silence pervaded the judges and those around.

The High Priest arose and thus addressed her;

" Mariamne of the Asmonean race and queen of Judæa, thou art cited before the Sanhedrin for offering the price of blood to Azahzel to poison our lord the king, your husband—add not to your horrid guilt but ' give glory to the Lord God of Israel, and make confession unto him.'"

Mariamne looked on Herod, then raised her hands, bent her head and in a clear unaltered voice replied;

" By the Great Jehovah I am innocent."

This declaration was recorded.

The High Priest called on the king to make his accusation. Mariamne's frame slightly shivered, and her eyelids closed for a moment, but with renovated spirit she looked on him until he was visibly agitated, and compelled to evade her by turning towards the judges, whom he thus addressed;

" Priests and Elders of Israel, to describe my feelings as a husband and a king, would be useless and irrelative. Had I followed the dictates of those feelings I should not now be here the accuser of my wife. I would have repudiated and left her to mourn for her past misdeeds. She has demanded to be called before the Sanhedrin, and has in our presence solemnly declared her innocence. Alas, I would that she had given glory to our God and confessed her crime, instead of adding perjury to her dreadful attempt to murder me. She cannot be aware of the evidence against her—The Lord will not suffer such crimes to be hidden—For years she has despised me, and has been wormwood to my soul instead of an affectionate wife. Neither my glory, the happiness of the people, nor my love have decreased her hatred, but increased it, until she tried, first, to win over to her the long tried faithful cupbearer Azahzel: finding that he honoured his king, and feared the law, she tempted him with bribes, to give me a potion she herself would mix—He knew the hatred that she bore towards me and suspected, that the potion was

poisonous. He obtained it, kept it by him and yesterday fell at my feet and told the whole dreadful story. The previous conduct of the accused upheld his tale—Lest I should be precipitate, a criminal, condemned to die, was sent for, told the doubt, and was promised the chance of his life to swallow this potion from the cup —He did so, the deadly mixture seized upon his vital parts, and he expired in dreadful agony."

The monarch bent his head, covered his face and groaned. The Herodians and others rent their garments, and many cursed the injured prisoner. She stood unmoved, with her hands crossed on her bosom. Dermah, kneeling by her side, was scrutinizing through her tears, the fiend Salome, on whose lip played an ill suppressed smile of exultation at the wreck of her lovely victim. Fear was pourtrayed on the face of the unfeeling Alexandra. The king continued;

" Azahzel is here ready to give his testimony: if more is required the dead body of the wretch who drank the poison must pollute this hall. I

could add accusations of other crimes as deadly by our law, but in mercy I forbear."

Azahzel was summoned, and the formula of the oath read to him, to which he gave the customary assent. He told the tale, in which he had been so well instructed by the vile Salome, with such minute precision and so many tears, that it almost staggered the conviction of her innocence existing in the minds of some of her friends: even murmurs were heard from many present, and the minions of the king looked towards Ananeel.

The hypocrite addressed the prisoner;

"Our law does not condemn before it hears the defence of the accused, so I beseech thee clear thyself of this accusation, if thou canst, before God and man."

Mariamne looked on him and with unaltered voice replied;

"*I have spoken.*"

The effect of these solemn words and her manner, swayed the opinions of the people, and many wept; Herod perceiving this grew angry and exclaimed;

" Perjured, unfaithful, perfidious murderess, tenfold guilty of death, I call upon your family, my kindred and my people, to curse you. Pride and vengeance have been the companions of your thoughts. I should for ever deem the wretch an enemy to God and man, who should defend you against these irrefutable proofs."

His passion almost stopped his utterance.—Dermah rose, her tears were dried, and she exclaimed;

" She is innocent; these accusations are the falsehoods of her enemies, who have duped the cruel and jealous Herod."

At these words a tumult of voices filled the court, and many blades were half unsheathed. Babarrah, who commanded the soldiers, stood near the king, and called, with a loud voice, that made the hall re-echo and the stoutest hold his peace;

" Let no man unsheath his blade before the Sanhedrin, lest the enemy should say, that justice has been overborne."

He stopped for a moment; then fixing his

eagle eyes upon the insensed yet fearful monarch, added;

" The queen is innocent. Azahzel's tale is false. And monarch, when the honour of your wife is the question, I may, without transgressing the laws of man, declare, that thou hast falsely accused her, and she is chaste and faithful."

The blood for a moment flushed the cheek of the noble Mariamne; but her countenance underwent no change. Before the astonished Herod and the awed assembly had recovered their surprise, Alexandra, whose fears for her own safety had overcome natural affection and every other consideration, left her place, and rushing to her injured child, thus barbed the arrows of calumny that had pierced her;

" Hence, hence perfidious woman, from the hour of your nuptials your husband has been vexed and thwarted by you. Your perjuries and infidelities have called down the vengeance of heaven on your head, and brought you to a deserved death."

She tore her hair, and loaded her with yet viler epithets, until Dermah and the spectators

raised a cry of abhorrence. The king declared his crown and honour tainted; and as soon as silence was obtained, the High Priest put the question to the judges, and they knowing the determination of the king, at once declared;

"*She is guilty of death.*"

Mariamne shewed no signs of fear, and seemed the only being there unmoved. Several of the judges, though they had sanctioned the condemnation, earnestly besought the king to postpone the execution of the sentence; and more than one proposed, that she should be imprisoned in some distant fortress. The king was desirous that should be the punishment, but many demanded her immediate death. Amid this confusion she was led away.

As soon as they reached a retired part of the Palace, she embraced Dermah, and said, in a low imploring voice;

"Save me one pang by going to your husband; rely on it he will not escape while you are here, and so I may have to answer for your lives. My *only*, my much-loved friend, leave me, or my resolution will fail me; for I

shall believe, that for my sake you are both sacrificed."

She imprinted one long last kiss with her cold lips, unclasped her arms, gazed on her for a moment, and saying, "farewell," hastened to leave her. Dermah uttered an agonizing cry, covered her face, and reluctantly left her forlorn friend to join her husband.

Salome followed Herod from the hall into the Palace, and there urged him not to delay the execution of the sentence, unless he desired to stir up rebellion in the kingdom; since not only the people were becoming turbulent, but numbers were pouring into the city from every quarter. The king was greatly agitated, and evidently reluctant to order Mariamne to be led to death. While his mind was wavering, Sabbion appeared, and prostrating himself, said;

"Blessed be the Lord's anointed; I have ever thought it my duty to my king, to warn him of impending danger;—the Asmonean guards are ready to revolt."

These words decided him; and, in defiance of the Jewish law, which decrees, that no one shall be

condemned and suffer on the same day, he called for the appointed officers, and commanded them to lead her to the forum, and there to fulfil the law. One dared to say, " that it was near the twelfth hour, and the law did not sanction the infliction of punishment by night, scarcely within the gates."

The opposition revived the monarch's rage, and he smote him and sent him to confinement, and repeated the dreadful order, and traversed his apartment with quick and heavy tread.

The officers entered her room, and found her there without one friend to support her at her utmost need. The slave Tezellah would have come forward, but a fierce Herodian thrust her back. They approached her, and the chief of them said, with faultering voice;

" *Daughter of death, we have received our orders.*"

She waved her hand for them to lead the way, and followed with slow and steady step.

Contrary to the usual custom, the place appointed for the horrid murder was the forum near the Palace. In passing through the ave-

nues, and across the courts, no friend raised a parting cry—no tear was shed; on every side were guards and mercenary warriors, and unknown faces. She passed the gateway, and was exposed to the public gaze. Mingled sounds of blessings, curses, woe, and cries for justice, instantly arose from among the people. She crossed her hands upon her bosom, and advanced unmoved by the horrid din. When she had reached the middle of the street beyond the Palace wall, a crowd of horsemen pressed down upon the front; at their head rode Jonathan and Reuben; on the side appeared Babarrah, backed by the Asmonean guard. He drew his faulchion, which was the preconcerted signal, and a chosen band spurred in among the crowd to surround their injured queen. Pheroras had anticipated the skilful movement, warned by the traitor Sabbion, and in an instant the spearmen were prepared, and he rode at the brave Barbarrah, and tried, by a sudden thrust, to pierce his bosom; the Arab had but a moment to ward off the blow, but at the same time cut the savage to the ground. The Galatians had, on

the first appearance of the guard, hastened through the gateway. Babarrah saw, at a single glance, that he had been betrayed, and cried, in a voice of agony;

"All, all is lost, my brave men; save yourselves for Mariamne's sake."

She looked at Babarrah, and with an imploring voice distinctly exclaimed;

"O spare the blood of my people—Come not to my rescue. Fly, for my sake fly."

Then turning to the officers said;

"Ye ministers of death lead on."

A serried phalanx of men, on either side, prevented her from seeing what transpired, and she moved slowly forward. They soon reached the place where all her sorrows were to end.

The sun was setting amid clouds, through which its beams did not penetrate, when the lovely victim reached the spot where the executioners were ready to perform their office. She advanced to the step where her coffin lay; with steady hand untied her veil that fell unheeded to the ground, the braid which bound her hair unfastened with it, and her raven tresses floated

over her marble neck. A merciless Herodian would have torn them off, but the executioners prevented his attempt.

Mariamne glanced on the silent crowd, covering the open space and all the terraced houses round, but spoke not; then gazed on the declining sun with an unearthly look; her lips moved as she prayed; at that moment the level beams burst through the cloudy veil, and shining on her pallid face and snowy garments, seemed to change her to a heavenly spirit. She appeared communing with guardian angels as she gently drew away her hair and knelt. The trembling satellite gave the unerring blow—Mariamne's quivering body sunk into its narrow cell, and her spirit returned to God who gave it.

Then there rose, alas too late, a cry of despair and woe that smote the monarch's ear, and told him that the dreadful deed was done. It sounded to him like a mighty voice, that quelled all human passions and appalled the soul. It seemed to tell him in words beyond the power of mortals to disbelieve, that he had murdered his spotless wife. He stood and trembled, then

shrieked in utter agony, and ran forth and called aloud "to bring him back his Mariamne." He met her bier, and following it his brother's corpse still looking fierce. As if a moment's doubt flashed across his maddening brain, he tore away the covering from Mariamne's coffin, and saw her face placid and lovely, even in death, no stain had soiled it, but her tresses were clogged with gore, and matted on her bosom.

Again the loud wail of woe was heard, and he remembered that she was gone for ever. He placed his hands upon his brow as if smitten by some unseen power—he screamed and rushed away scourged by the lashes of upbraiding conscience, and with burning madness on his soul. When the tempest of his mind was lulled, he ordered his officers to prepare the minstrels and banquet, and called for Mariamne; when she came not, he repeated her name until the horrid truth was remembered, and he again became a raving maniac.—Months passed away; he left his kingdom, wandered amid the deserts, and called for her he had so foully murdered. Time and the will of Providence restored him to his

reason. His transient penitence had no foundation on which to stand; he again became a tyrant, and imbrued his guilty hands in blood, until;

The voice in Rama had been heard;
Lamentation, and most bitter weeping;
The daughters of Rachael weeping for their children,
Refusing to be comforted for their children, because they were not.

Then God smote him with loathsome and horrible diseases, and astonishment of heart, and called him to the tribunal of Almighty justice.

NOTE.

LEST it should be thought, that I have transgressed, without some authority, the scanty outline of the Jewish historian in his account of Alexandra's conduct to her daughter, I quote the following passages from the work of the writer who calls himself Joseph the son of Gorion.

" Alexandra verò, illius mater, cùm ei res innotuisset, *prosiliens* exclamavit atque indignabunda Salomen regis sororem, sic allocuta est: egredere perfida, quæ marito tuo semper refractaria fuisti, eumque *mendaciis* et *scortationibus* tuis ad mortem adegisti, dein concitato animo ac voce sublata hæc ei ingessit maledicta."

" Fœminæ quoque aliæ multæ per fenestras et cancellos prospicientes maledictis illam ac pro-

bris affecerunt, quòd Mariamne ipsius fraude absque ullo suo merito ad mortem referetur," &c. &c.

The difference between the true and spurious Josephus I have used as I thought best.—I will add the following words;

" In dicta Josippi Epitom : pag 139, narratur, quòd Mariamna ad *forum urbis perducta ibique interfecta sit.*

" Cumque ad locum, morti destinatum, venisset, *collum denudatum præbuit* gladio satellitis regii, qui illam mandato regis interfecit."

THE END.

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